A TOUR ROUND MY GARDEN

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100 ILLUSTRATIONS

A TOUR
ROUND MY GARDEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
OF ALPHONSE KARR.

Revised and Edited
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A NEW EDITION.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM HARVEY.

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PREFACE.

WHILE so many foreign authors are enjoying an English reputation scarcely inferior to that by which they are distinguished in their own land, it is rather remarkable that the works of Alphonse Karr should be so little known in this country. There are few writers who have shewn such keen perception of character, such true delicacy of feeling, and such real originality of thought, as are to be found in every page of this charming author. Through all his works there runs a vein of the gentlest feelings towards mankind, an appreciation of everything that is good and noble, and a sympathy with every kindly affection of our nature, rendered more piquant by a slight spice of genial misanthropy.

His lively wit is directed lightly against the ordinary failings of mankind; and there is but one class of men for whom he has no mercy. He treats a sham much as an American Indian treats an enemy—he tomahawks him with an argument, scalps him with an epigram, and triumphantly despoils him of his borrowed plumes.

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In the translation of the Work, it has been an object to preserve, as far as possible, that originality which adds so much to the power of a book; and for this reason the allusions to French customs and manners have been left untouched. Wherever practicable, the plants and other objects of natural history have been designated by their English titles; but, as many of them are not British, their French names have necessarily been retained.

In order to make the present volume more worthy of the public notice, it has been copiously illustrated with Woodcuts by WILLIAM HARVEY, and the BROTHERS DALZIEL.

MERTON COLLEGE,

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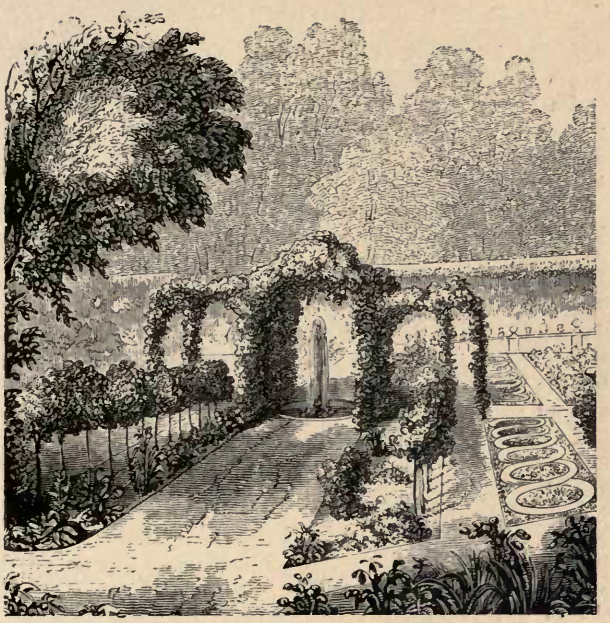


LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Do you remember, my friend, the day on which you set out for that long and delightful tour, the preparations for which had so long engrossed your time and attention?

I called in the morning, to pass a few minutes with you, as I had been accustomed to do, but not being aware that it was the day fixed on for your departure, I was surprised at the unusual state of your house: everybody appeared unsettled and busy, and the servants were running up and down stairs unceasingly. An elegant travelling carriage, with the horses harnessed, was standing in the court-yard. At the moment I entered, the postilion had already placed one of his huge boots in the stirrup, and one of your servants,

mounted is a courier to prepare relays, was teazing his horse, which curvetted beneath him.

On my arrival, I found you absent and preoccupied; it was an effort for you to answer my questions, and address a few words to me; you seemed as agitated as a bird about to take wing.

You bade me adieu with a warm and friendly squeeze of the hand, and sprang into the carriage; Arthur, your *valet de chambre*, got up behind, you waved your hand, and the courier set off at full gallop. In the meanwhile, the postilion drove out of the court-yard, cracked his whip as a signal of departure; this brought the neighbours to their windows, the passers-by stopped, you waved me one more adieu, and bid the postilion, "Go on!" The horses were off at a gallop, and all soon disappeared at the turning of the street.

As for me, I stood looking after you, bewildered, stupified, sad, dissatisfied, humiliated, without knowing precisely why.

The neighbours reclosed their windows; the passers-by continued their way; your porter closed the gate of the court-yard, the hinges giving forth their inharmonious grating: and yet there I stood motionless in the street, not knowing what to do, what was to become of me, or where I should go; it appeared to me that the only road in the world was that which you were pursuing, and that you had taken it away with you.

Nevertheless, I began to perceive that people looked at me with astonishment, and I took at random—for the sake of moving rather than with a view of going anywhere—the opposite direction to that by which you had departed.

It was not long before it occurred to me to ask myself where I was going; and this question, to a certain point, embarrassed me; the public walks appeared dull—the people out of spirits—I determined to return home.

As I walked along, I began to think of you in not the very best of humours. I could not help fancying that your air was almost disdainful; you seemed flattered by the attention your departure and your equipage excited; you appeared to leave your street, your house, and your old friend, as we leave things that are worn out, and with which we have no longer anything to do.

Gradually, I allowed feelings almost amounting to ill-will towards you to creep into my heart; but, happily, I soon stifled them, when I found, upon examination, that they owed their birth to nothing but envy.

Every happiness excites jealousy. When we see others in the enjoyment of it, we endeavour to persuade ourselves that they have injured us in some serious manner; and then we try to dignify that mean sentiment of envy with a nobler name, and call it just resentment, proper pride, or wounded dignity.

When once I recognised my weakness, I quickly triumphed over it, and justified you; but it was not so easy a matter to justify myself to my own conscience.

Truly the evil one would have very little hold of us if he presented the baits he lays for us under their proper names.

When I returned to my home I could not refrain from envying your happiness, but you I no longer envied; you again appeared the same excellent friend, as soon as I ceased to seek in you those chimerical qualities that are imposed upon a poor Pylades, although we never examine if we ourselves are for another what we require another should be for us; in a word, every one is anxious to have a friend, without taking any particular pains to be one himself.

But, as my ill-humour towards you faded away, it seized upon myself, and I complained bitterly that my scanty fortune would not permit me, like you, to see other countries, other men, other climates; and I became painfully aware of the poverty to which I had hitherto given but little attention.

What! said I to myself, shall I be always, then, like that poor goat which I see fastened to a post in a field yonder? She has already cropped all the grass which grew within the circle its cord allowed it to traverse, and she must recommence by nibbling the herbage which she has already eaten down as close as velvet.

Whilst thus soliloquizing, I stood upon the balcony of a low window which opened on to my garden, looking out mechanically upon the scene before me; the sun was setting; at first my eyes, and afterwards my soul, were enthralled

and engrossed by the magnificent spectacle which presented itself.

High up in the heavens, towards the west, were three strips of clouds: the highest was formed of a kind of foamy flakes, grey and rose-coloured; the second was in long tints of a darkish blue, slightly tinged with saffron yellow; the third was composed of grey clouds, over which floated a clear yellow vapour: beneath was a vast lake of bright, pure, and limpid blue, while under this was stretched a long grey cloud, with a fringe of pale fire, and lower down was another lake of a rather paler blue; when again floated a narrow cloud, of a grey colour, like that of the burned ashes of a volcano, and under this was a fresh lake of a somewhat greenish blue, like some turquoises, but deep and limpid as the others; and then, beneath all, were masses of cloud, whose upper part was white, glistening with pale fires, and the under part of a sombre grey, with a fringe of the most brilliant flames.

There, in a thick orange-coloured vapour, sank the sun, of which only a blood-red point was visible. Then, when the sun had totally disappeared, all that had been yellow in the picture assumed corresponding shades of red; the pale blue or faint green became a more full and dark azure. And all nature seemed, as I did, to admire these eternal beauties.

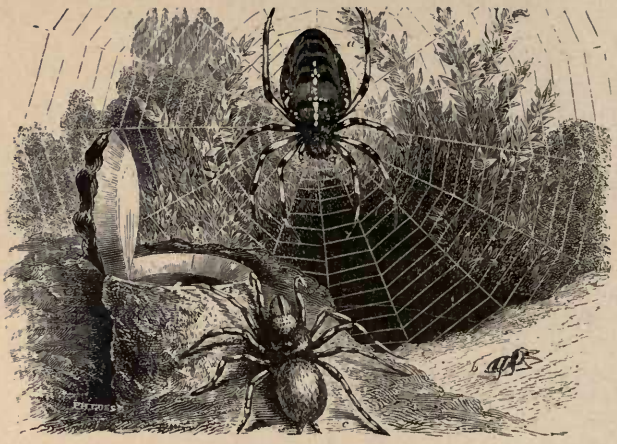
The breeze had ceased to agitate the leaves of the trees; the birds no longer disputed for their roosts under the thick foliage; not even an insect was heard to buzz in the air; the very flowers had closed their rich blossoms, and there was nothing to occupy or distract the senses.

Then I reflected that, at many miles distance, you, in your calèche, with your courier and your postilion before, your valet behind, could not possibly behold a more splendid spectacle than that which was spread before my eyes and that, probably such a one would awaken in you less contemplation, and consequently less delight.

And I thought of all the riches which God has given to the poor; of the earth, with its mossy and verdant carpets, its trees, its flowers, its perfumes; of the heavens, with aspects so various and so magnificent; and of all those eternal splendours which the rich man has no power to augment, and which so far transcend all he is able to buy.

I thought of the exquisite delicacy of my senses, which enables me to enjoy these noble and pure delights, in all their plenitude. I also remembered how few and simple were my wants and desires;—the richest, most secure and most independent of fortunes. And, with joined and clasped hands, with eyes raised towards the gradually darkening heavens, with a heart filled with joy, serenity, and thankfulness, I implored pardon of God for my murmurings and my ingratitude, and offered up my grateful thanks for all the enjoyments he had lavished upon me.

And as I sunk to sleep that night, my spirit was filled with pity for those *poor rich*.



LETTER II.

THE LOVES OF THE SPIDERS—THE TOUR—COMPARISONS.

As I stood at my window the next morning, I perceived in a corner a spider's web. The hunter, who had spread his nets, was busy in repairing the rents caused, either the evening before or that morning, by some prey of an unexpected size, or a desperate resistance. When all was repaired, the spider, which was twice as big and as heavy as the largest fly, ran along the web without breaking a single mesh, and went to conceal itself in an obscure corner, whence it might watch. I observed it for a long time. Two or three flies floating heedlessly about were taken in these perfidious toils, and struggled in vain; the implacable Nimrod darted upon its captives, and sucked them without mercy; after which it repaired one or two damaged threads, and returned to its hiding-place.

But behold! another spider of a smaller size. Why has it left its nets and its ambush? Ha! ha! it is a male, and a male in love; he thinks no longer of the chase, he is like the son of Theseus—

"My bow, my darts, my car, invite in vain."

He approaches, and he draws back—he loves, he fears. There

he is, upon the first thread of the web of her whom he loves; terrified at his own audacity, he recoils and flies away, but only quickly to return. He makes one step, then another, then stops.

Gentle reader, you have seen timid lovers, you have been one yourself if you have ever really loved. You have trembled with terror beneath the pure and innocent glance of a young girl; you have felt your voice fail when near her; and certain words which you wished to utter, but durst not, have seemed to fill your throat to strangulation. But never have you seen a lover so timid as this—and not without good reasons.

The female spider is much larger than the male, and this is almost generally the case with insects. If, at the moment at which the lover presents himself, *her heart speaks to her*, she yields, like all other beings, to the sweet influence of love; she softens as the panther does, she gives herself up to the delight of loving and being beloved, and ventures to evince it; she encourages her timid lover, and her web becomes for that beloved lover the *silken ladder of our romances.*

But if she is insensible, if her hour has not yet come, she nevertheless advances slowly to meet the trembling Hippolytus, who seeks in vain to read in her features whether he is to hope or to fear; then, when at a few paces from the amorous youth, she darts upon him—seizes him—and eats him!

True it is then that the most ancient and most ridiculous metaphors invented by lovers cease to be metaphors, and assume a real and terrifying sense. Here is certainly a lover who has reason to complain of the hard-heartedness of his beloved. Here is a lover who will not be accused of exaggeration, if, into the avowal of his sentiments he should allow to glide the often-abused question, "Am I to live or die?" or even this sentence. "If you repulse my love, it will be my death-warrant."

My friend, however, was more fortunate, for the belle advanced towards him, whilst he waited for her in visible anxiety; but whether he perceived in her behaviour any unsatisfactory sign, or whether the coquette had not sufficient skill to compose her countenance, which I could not distinguish from the smallness of its proportions, or whether she

allowed more hunger than love to appear in her air, or whether, in short, the lover was not struck with one of those intense flames which brave all dangers, he took to flight with such rapidity that I lost sight of him, as doubtless did his inhuman mistress, for she returned tranquilly to her ambuscade, to wait for other victims.

I had before been present at similar scenes; for I have passed a great part of my life in the country, and had much studied the habits of insects; but this time, the little drama of which I had been a spectator made a particular impression upon me, and my thoughts reverted to you.

Truly, said I to myself, this must be a singular restlessness of spirit, this love of travelling, and travellers are strange beings to go to great distances, and at great expense, to see new things, without having taken the trouble to look at their feet or over their heads, where as many extraordinary and unknown things are passing as they can possibly desire to know. There he is, gone, continued I, still thinking of you; and he may make the tour of the whole world without meeting with so strange a love affair as I have just been a witness of from my window.

Under whatever part of the heavens they may dwell, in whatever fashion they may dress, or not dress at all, men live upon four or five passions, which are always the same, which do not vary in their depths, and very little in their forms.

Love nowhere presents so singular a drama as that which has just passed before my eyes.

In yonder tuft of moss, green as an emerald, wavy as velvet, and as large as the palm of my hand, there are loves, hatreds, combats, transformations, and miracles, going on, which are perfectly unknown to us, and which we have never looked after. And further, in great things, particularly such as concern man, nature appears to have restricted herself to rules almost invariable, whilst among flowers and insects, she seems to have abandoned herself to the most strange and delightful fantasies.

A whimsical mania is that which makes men close their eyes against all surrounding objects, and only deign to open them at five hundred miles from home.

"Well!" cried I to myself, "I also will make a voyage; I

will see new and extraordinary things; I also will have something to tell."

Make you the tour of the world,

I WILL MAKE THE TOUR OF MY GARDEN.

I will wait for you here, my friend; you will find me under my fig-tree, or under one of the honeysuckles, and I will make you avow that there is a great and terrible punishment for travellers as for inconstant lovers:—for travellers, arrival; for inconstants, success; for they then find how much all countries and all women are alike.

What are you going to see abroad? How proud you will be in your first letter, if, by chance, you should ever think of writing to me at all, to tell me you have seen women tattooed and painted in divers colours, with rings in their noses.

And I will answer you: Well, my good friend, what occasion was there for going so far? Why did you go further than two streets from your own house? There was nothing to prevent your looking at your sister-in-law, who, after the example of a hundred other women you are acquainted with, and each of whom is at once painter, original, and portrait, puts pearl white and rouge upon her brow and cheeks, black upon her eyelids, blue to increase the apparent fulness of her veins, and passes rings through her ears in the same manner that savage women pass them through their noses. Pray, why is it more strange to pierce one cartilage than another? Can the difference be worth going so far to see?

I know very well you will meet with sharpers and cheats; with the imbecile, the hypocritical, the proud, the egotistical, the envious, the mendicant; but have you not remarked that there are a few of these to be equally found here?

Is it so difficult, in this country, to experience hunger or thirst—too much heat, or too much cold, that you think it worth while to go so far for these unpleasant sensations?

Is there any plague, or any fever, or any leprosy unknown in our country that you feel a wish to take?

Or, are you so weary of the common house-flies which annoy you here in the summer, that you travel two thousand miles for the pleasure of being stung by musquitoes?

LETTER III.

THE TWO CARPETS—THE GLORIES OF NATURE ALWAYS WITHIN OUR REACH—IN THE JOURNEY OF LIFE ARE MANY PROMISES OF HAPPINESS—OUR PLAYTHINGS ARE BUT CHANGED IN NAME.

THROUGHOUT the night, my thoughts have been upon you my absent friend, of you and your travels,—and I comprehend you less than ever. Are you well acquainted with these flies that shine and buzz around you; with these flowers which bloom and perfume the air; with these birds that sing so sweetly; with these leaves that tremble—with that water which murmurs? Have you contemplated them, each once only, and the various parts that compose them? Have you followed them from their birth to their death? Have you seen their loves and their marriages, before going so far to see things you have not seen? As for me, this morning I had a great treat, of which I hasten to give you a share.

About three years ago I purchased an old carpet to place in my studio, as I call an apartment tolerably well furnished,

in which I sometimes shut myself up, to prevent interruption whilst I am doing nothing. This carpet represents foliage of a sombre green, strewed over with large red flowers. Yesterday my eyes fell upon my carpet, and I perceived that the colours were becoming very faint, that the green was getting of a very dingy hue, that the red was faded in a deplorable manner, and that the wool was worn off, and showed the string over the whole space that led from the door to the window, and from the window to my arm-chair in the chimney corner. That is not all; whilst moving an enormous and heavy table of carved wood, I made a rent in the carpet. All this disturbed me so much, that I immediately had the rent repaired, but I could neither restore freshness to the leaves nor brilliancy to the red flowers. But this morning, whilst walking round my garden, I stopped before the grass-plot which is nearly in the centre of it.

Now here, said I, is just such a carpet as I like, always fresh, always handsome, always rich. It cost me sixty pounds of grass seeds, at twopence halfpenny the pound, that is to say, twelve shillings, and it is about the same age as that in my closet, which cost me twelve pounds ten shillings. That which cost twelve pounds ten shillings has undergone sad changes; it is now poor, and becoming poorer every day, in its tarnished splendour, threadbare, disgraceful and patched; whilst this before me becomes every year more beautiful, more green, more tufted. And with what profuseness of beauty it changes and renews itself! In spring it is of a pale green, strewed over with small white daisies and a few violets. Shortly after, the green becomes deeper, and the daisies are replaced by glossy buttercups. To the buttercups succeed red and white trefoil. In the autumn, my carpet assumes a yellower tint, and instead of the red and white trefoil, it is sprinkled with colchicums, which spring from the earth like little violet-coloured lilies. In winter its white snow dazzles the eyes, as it has been danced and walked over. Then although in the spring, as well as the autumn, it is a little worn and ragged, it puts itself to rights in such a manner, that we cannot perceive its wounds, or even its scars: whilst my other carpet remains there with its eternal red flowers, which

become more ugly every day, and with its badly-mended rents.—How rich then I am!

Will you write to me as you promised? On my part, I will write you an account of my journey; I do not well know whither to direct my letters, but yours will tell me when and where. But what do you expect to see yonder which you could not see here? I will endeavour to describe, as if it were done by yourself, some distant country. Let us see: "The sky is grey, like a heavy leaden cupola; the earth is covered with a sheet of snow; the trees bend their black skeleton forms to the sharp winds; at their feet venomous toad-stools spring and flourish, the flowers are dead; the frozen water is motionless between its herbless banks. Those who persist in calling fountains mirrors, in which shepherdesses contemplate their simple, pretty features, and arrange their modest dress; those who only see in nature what they have first read in books, are obliged to admit that their poetical mirrors are turned silver side uppermost. Some firs, in their melancholy, sombre foliage, afford asylum to only a few mute birds, with their feathers standing on end with cold, and which, pressed with hunger, fight for the scanty fruit left upon the leafless trees; the purple berries of the whitethorn, the scarlet berries of the service-tree; the orange berries of the cranberry, the black berries of the privet, or the blue ones of the laurustinus.

"There is in the air neither the song of birds nor the buzzing of insects, nor the perfume of flowers. The sun only remains every day for a few hours above the horizon; he rises and sets in pale and dull splendour."

What country is this? If it were you, my dear friend, who were writing these lines, you would call this dismal climate Norway, with its snows and ice. For myself, this country is my winter garden; in six months it will be so. I have only to wait. I need not go and seek, midst a thousand dangers—and, what is still worse, midst a thousand cares—the rich countries where the sun is the object of adoration. I will wait a few days, and the sun will make me seek a friendly shade of balmy coolness.

There are times when the flowers languish with heat: there are times when one only hears among the parched herbs, the

monotonous cry of the grasshopper, when one sees nothing stirring abroad but the lizards. The nights are cool, sweet,

THE LIZARD.

and fragrant; the flowering trees are filled with nightingales, exhaling perfumes and celestial melody; and the grass is brilliant with the glow-worms gliding about with their violet flames.

You will in this manner, describe to me some far-off country; *I* will thus delineate what my garden affords. The seasons, as they pass away, are climates which travel round the globe, and come to seek me. Your long voyages are nothing but fatiguing visits, which you go to pay to the seasons which would themselves have come to you.

But there is still another land, a delightful country, which would in vain be sought for on the waves of the sea, or across the lofty mountains. In that country, the flowers not only exhale sweet perfumes, but intoxicating thoughts of love. There every tree, every plant breathes, in a language more noble than poetry, and more sweet than music, things of which no human tongue can give an idea. The sand of the roads is gold and precious stones; the air is filled with songs, compared to which those of the nightingales and thrushes, which I now listen to, are no better than the croaking of frogs in their reedy marshes. Man in that land is good, great, noble, and generous.

There all things are the reverse of those which we see every day; all the treasures of the earth, all dignities crowded together, would be but objects of ridicule, if there offered in exchange for a faded flower, or an old glove, left in a honeysuckle arbour. But why do I talk about honeysuckles? Why I am forced to give the names of flowers you know to the flowers of these charming regions? In this country no one believes in the existence of perfidy, inconstancy, old age, death, or forgetfulness, which is the death of the heart. Man there requires neither sleep nor food; an old wooden bench is there a thousand times more soft than eider-down elsewhere; slumbers are there more calm and delicious, constantly attended by blissful dreams. The sour sloe of the hedges, the insipid fruit of the bramble, there acquire a flavour so delicious that it would be absurd to compare them to the pine-apple of other regions. Life is there more mildly happy than dreams can aspire to be in other countries. Go, then, and seek these poetic isles!

Alas! in reality, it was but a poor little garden, in a mean suburb, when I was eighteen, in love, and when *she* would steal thither for an instant, at sunset!

So loved I a little shut-up garden.

After all, is this life anything but a terrible journey, without repose, and with but one common end in view? Is it anything more than arriving successively at various ages, and taking or leaving something at each? Does not all that surrounds us change every year? Is not every age a different country? You were a child; you are a young man; you may become an old man. Do you believe you shall find as much difference between two persons, however remote from each other they may be, as between you a child and you an old man?

You are in childhood;—the man is there with his fair hair, his bold, limpid glance, and his light and joyous heart; he loves every one, and every one seems to love him; everything gives him something, and everything promises him still much more. There is nothing which does not pay him a tribute of joy, nothing which, for him, is not a plaything. The butterflies in the air, the bluebottles in the corn-fields, the sand of the sea-shore, the herbage of the meadows, the green alleys of

the forest—all give him pleasure, all whisper to him promises of mystic happiness.

You arrive at youth; the body is active and strong, the heart noble and disinterested. There, you violently break the playthings of your childhood, and smile at the importance you once attached to them, because you have found some fresh play-things, with which you are as much in earnest as you were with your tops and balls; now is the turn of friendship, love, heroism, and devotedness,—you have all these within you, and you look for them in others. But these are flowers that fade, and do not flourish at the same time in every heart. With this one, they are only in bud; with that, they have long since passed away. You ask aloud the accomplishment of your desires, as you would ask holy promises. There is not a flower or a tree that does not appear to have betrayed you.

But here we now are, arrived at old age; we then have grey or white hairs—or a wig. The beautiful flowers of which we were speaking yield fruit but little expected,—incredulity, egotism, mistrust, avarice, irony, gluttony. You laugh at the playthings of your youth, because you still meet with others to which you attach yourself more seriously, places, medals, ribbons of different orders, honours, and dignities.

> "It nothing boots that man, by doom, grows old,
> He gains each stage, still ignorant and new;—
> On our last winters, on our age extinct,
> Wisdom bestows but pale and sickly light,
> Like the fair moon's, whose mild and opal rays
> Fall on night's hours, when nothing more is done."

Days and years are darts which Death launches at us; it reserves the most penetrating for old age; the early ones have destroyed successively your faiths, your passions, your virtues, your happiness. Now it pours in grape-shot!—it has shot away your hair, and your teeth, it has wounded and weakened your muscles, it has touched your memory, it aims at the heart, it aims at life. Then everything becomes your enemy: in youth, the beautiful nights of summer brought you perfumes, remembrances, and delicious reveries; they yield you nothing now but coughs, rheumatism, and pleurisies.

You hate those who are younger than yourself, because they will inherit your money; they are already the heirs of

your youth, your hopes, your visions, of all which is already dead in you—

> "Few men the secret learn of growing old;
> Like certain fruits, they rot, but ripen not."

Tell me, are we to-day that which we were yesterday, or shall be to-morrow? Have we not cause to make singular observations upon ourselves daily? Do we not present a curious spectacle to ourselves?

Well, I will decide to commence my journey to-morrow, or perhaps I shall finish by finding that it is too great an exertion, even to make the tour of one's garden.

THE WREN.

LETTER IV.

THE START—COSTUME—THE WREN—THE MASON BEE—THE CHRYSIS—MARIE ANTOINETTE.

I HAVE started, my dear friend, and two things already embarrass me. In the first place, I do not know at what precise distance from the point of departure we must be, to entitle us to employ in our recitals the emphatic pretext which gives so much importance to travellers—*We set out, we sailed, we saw, we noticed, we drank, and so forth.*

Have I any right to make use of this, the true travelling language? And if I do not, will my journey be a real journey?

My second difficulty is—in the accounts you no doubt prepare for me, at the same time that I am inditing a description of my journey, you have an inappreciable advantage over me. If, upon reading some narration, *a little* extraordinary, or a description *somewhat* supernatural, I indulge in an "Ah! ah!" or a gesture of incredulity, or even of admiration mingled with doubt, you will answer me: "Go and see it!" It is only three thousand miles off. But if, on the contrary, I astonish you by anything unusual or prodigious, I have not the same resource; I can only say to you—"Look for your-

self; it is on your right hand or your left; it is on the rose-bush at the end of the walk, or upon the periwinkle at your feet;" or, "Step a little on one side; that which I am describing is in the moss you are treading upon: you may destroy my proof." I have nothing then to do but to tell you the truth; whilst you, satisfied that it is a general belief that travellers at least exaggerate, will not be restrained by a virtue which will bring you no honour, but will simply cause you to be accused of dryness and poverty of imagination.

I saw your travelling costume, my dear friend; I owe you a description of mine: it is an old dressing gown of black velvet, with which you are well acquainted; a cap to match, and a pair of yellow morocco slippers—I do not carry fire-arms.

I leave my study at a quarter before six: the sun is already high above the horizon; his rays sparkle like fire-dust through the leaves of the great service trees, and shining on my house impart to it a rose and saffron-tinted hue. I go down three steps. Here we are in China! You stop me at my first word with a smile of disdain. My house is entirely covered by a Wistaria*: the Wistaria is a creeping, branching plant, with a foliage somewhat resembling that of the acacia, and from which hang numberless large bunches of flowers of a pale blue colour, which exhale the sweetest odour. This magnificent plant comes from China: perhaps you are admiring it there whilst I contemplate it here.

I do not believe I exaggerate, even with you, when I declare that I think this a thousand times more beautiful than the richest palaces—this house of wood, all green, all blossoming, all perfumed, which every year increases in verdure, blossoms, and sweet odours.

Under the projecting roof is the nest of a wren, quite a little bird, or rather a pinch of brown and grey feathers, like those of a partridge; it runs along old walls, and makes a nest of moss and grass, in the shape of a bottle. I salute thee, my little bird, thou wilt be my guest for this year! Thou art welcome to my house and to my garden. Tend and bring up thy numerous family. I promise thee peace and tranquillity; thy repose, but more particularly thy confidence, shall be respected. There is moss yonder, near the fountain, and

* *Wistaria sinensis.*—Ed.

plenty of dried herbage in the walks, from the newly-mown grass-plat. There she is on the edge of her nest; she looks at me earnestly with her beautiful black eyes. She is rather frightened, but does not fly away.

The little wren is not the only guest at my old house. You perceive between the joists, the intervals are filled up with rough stones and plaster. On the front, which is exposed to the south, there is a hole into which you could not thrust a goose-quill; and yet it is a dwelling: there is a nest within it, belonging to a sort of bee, who lives a solitary life.* Look at her, returning home with her provisions; her hind feet are loaded with a yellow dust, which she has taken from the stamens of flowers: she goes into the hole; when she comes out again there will be no pollen on her feet; with honey, which she has brought, she will make a savoury paste of it at the bottom of her nest. This is, perhaps, her tenth journey to-day, and she shows no inclination to rest.

All these cares are for one egg which she has laid; for a single egg which she will never see hatched; besides, that which will issue from that egg, will not be a fly like herself, but a worm, which will not be metamorphosed into a fly for some time afterwards.

She has, however, hidden it in that hole, and knows precisely how much nourishment it will require before it arrives at the state which ushers in its transformation into a fly. This nourishment she goes to seek, and she seasons and prepares it. There, she is gone again!

But what is this other brilliant little fly which is walking upon the house wall? Her breast is green, and her abdomen is of a purple red; but these two colours are so brilliant, that I am really at a loss to find words splendid enough to express them, but the names of an emerald and a ruby joined together.

That pretty fly—that living jewel—is the "chrysis." I scarcely dare breathe, for fear of making it fly away. I should like to take it in my hands, that I might have sufficient time to examine it more closely.† This likewise is the mother of a family; she also has an egg to lay, from which will issue a

* *Anthophora retusa.*—Ed. † *Chrysis ignita.*—Ed.

fly like herself, but which she will never see. She also knows how much nourishment her offspring will require; but, more richly clothed than the bee, she does not, like her, know how to gather the pollen from flowers, or to make a paste of it with honey.

She has but one resource, and that resource she is determined to employ—she will neither recoil from roguery nor theft to secure the subsistence of her offspring; she has

THE CHRYSIS.

recognised the solitary bee, and she is going to lay her egg in her nest: it will hatch sooner than that of the true proprietor; then the intruder will eat the provisions so painfully collected for the legitimate child, who, when it is hatched in its turn, will have nothing to do but to die of hunger.

There she is at the edge of the hole—she hesitates—she decides—she enters.

This insect interests me, she is so beautiful! The other likewise interests me, she is so industrious! But, here she comes back through the air: one would think her a warrior covered with chased armour and a golden cuirass; she buzzes as she comes along. The chrysis has heard the buzzing, which is for her the terrible sound of a war trumpet. She

wishes to fly; she comes out; but the other, justly irritated, pounces upon the daring intruder, beating it with her head. She bruises and tears the brilliant gauze of her wings, and beats her down to the dust, where she falls stupified and inanimate.

The bee then enters into her nest, and deposits and prepares her provisions; but, still agitated with her combat and her victory, she sets out again through the air. I follow her with my eyes for a long time, and at last she disappears.

The poor chrysis is not, however, dead: she gets up again, shakes herself, flutters, and attempts to fly; but her lacerated wings will no longer support her. What can she do to escape the fury of her enemy? It is not her business to fly away; her business is to deposit her egg in the bee's nest, and to secure future provision for her offspring, but the bee came back too soon. She ascends, climbing painfully: at times her strength seems to fail her; she is forced to stop, but at last she arrives—she enters—she is in! Now one's interest is for her. Just now she was only beautiful, now she is very unfortunate. I am aware that a long plea might be made for the other. I should not like to be appointed judge between them. Ah! she is out again—she flies away! But oh, how happy she is to have succeeded! Now I begin to feel for the bee. The poor bee continues to bring provisions for its young, which, nevertheless will die of hunger: she makes fresh journeys to the flowers she loves; she places herself on the catkins of the willow, upon the white flowers of the arbutus, that beautiful evergreen tree, whose blossoms resemble those of the lily of the valley, and whose fruits are like strawberries; she stops also on the berries of the yew, that poor tree, so tormented in our gardens, by being tortured into globes, squares, vases, swans, peacocks—a good, kind tree, which lends itself to everything, and is naturally abused.

Were I to watch, one after the other, all the flies which shine in the sun upon my house, the insects which conceal themselves in the flowers of the wistaria, to suck honey from them, and the insects which insinuate themselves to eat those honey suckers; the caterpillars which crawl upon the leaves, and the enemies of those caterpillars and those butterflies—

if I were to describe to you their birth, their loves, their combats, their metamorphoses—perhaps you would have returned from your tour before I had proceeded a single step; but I am determined, in this journey, to stop only at things which strike my eyes, without research, without labour, without study. Let us quit the old wooden house then, and follow at random this tortuous path.

Here is the white julienne,* with its long branches of flowers; to enjoy its perfume, you must stoop down to it; it is only in the evening that it exhales its sweets to a distance. This was one of the favourite flowers of the unfortunate queen Marie Antoinette. She was confined in the vilest chamber of the prison of the Conciergerie. In the same apartment, separated from her only by a screen, was a gendarme, who quitted her neither night nor day. The queen's whole wardrobe consisted of an old black gown and stockings, which she took off to mend herself, remaining with her feet bare. I am not sure that I should have loved Marie Antoinette, but how is it possible to avoid admiring so much misery and misfortune! A woman,—her name is not sufficiently known —a good and an excellent woman, discovered a blessing and a luxury to bestow upon her whom it was forbidden to name otherwise than as the widow Capet. Madame Richard, a keeper of the prison, brought her every day bouquets of the flowers she loved; pinks, juliennes, and tuberoses. She thus exchanged perfumes for the putrid miasmas of the prison. The poor queen had something to look at besides the humid walls of her dungeon. Madame Richard was denounced, arrested, and put into prison, but they did not dare to persecute her further, and shortly they released her. At a later period, Danton exclaimed in his dungeon: "Oh, if I could but see a tree!" The julienne remains the flower of Marie Antoinette. The great Condé, when confined at Vincennes, cultivated pinks.

* The sweet-scented white shrubby stock (*Mathiola incana*).—Ed.

LETTER V.

VARIED COLOURS OF THE ROSE—ITS PROGRESS FROM A WILD FLOWER, OR EGLANTINE, TO ITS PRESENT PERFECTION—THE CETONIA, THE ENEMY OF THE ROSE—THE APHIS ROSÆ—EXTRAORDINARY FECUNDITY OF AN APHIS—THE LADY-BIRD—NATURE'S PROVISION TO PRESERVE A BALANCE—THE GENERATIVE PRINCIPLE IN FLOWERS—GRAFTED ROSE.

I WAS very near passing by this rose-tree: I am passionately fond of roses, but I don't like to talk about them. The poor roses have been so abused! The Greeks said five or six pretty things about them; the Latins translated these, and added to them three or four of their own. From that time, the poets of all countries and all ages have translated, copied, and imitated that which the Greeks and Latins said, without at all heightening our love of the flower by any fresh colouring. They have even continued to call the month of May the month of Roses, without reflecting that roses blossom earlier in Greece and Italy than in our lands, where almost all roses wait for the suns of June to expand their beauties.

Are you not wearied, as I am, with the eternal loves of the butterfly and the rose; loves, by-the-bye, which have no existence? Butterflies light upon roses as upon other flowers,

but the rose is far from being one of the flowers they prefer. Are you not wearied, as I am, with *the tints of the lily and the rose*, with which all women are bedaubed, and which, in reality, would be as hideous as diamonds or coals for eyes, genuine pearls for teeth, or eatable cherries for lips? Are you not wearied, as I am, at having all our beauties roses; in a word, with all the insipidities and sillinesses for which these poor roses are the pretext? I think it disgraceful that our poets are not better acquainted with nature and all the eternal splendours with which God has endowed our abode. I scarcely know one who has not proved by the manner in which he speaks of flowers, trees, and herbage, that he has never taken the pains to look at them. Only listen to them! they confine themselves within three or four trivial generalities, which they have read, and which they repeat like synonymes.

They are *meadows enamelled with flowers.* With what flowers? of what colours are they? And in spring and autumn it is just the same; violets and roses always bloom together in verse, though never in nature. Some, more bold than the rest, say that these flowers are *of a thousand colours. The flowery banks of rivulets!* Are they the same flowers that enamel the meadows? They know no more about them. *Zephyr who sports in the groves;* which same zephyr is very fond of kissing *a half-blown rose.*

They who write in verse are only acquainted with *la rose, à demi éclose* (the half-blown rose), on account of the rhyme. An innovator, about four hundred years ago, ventured upon *fraiche éclose* (newly blown), but they stopped there.

But, look yonder; see, springing from its beautiful foliage, sharp pointed as swords, a stem bearing only on one side a spike of lovely rose-coloured or white flowers; that is a gladiolus. The poets speak of it sometimes, but they only know one thing about it, and that is, that it rhymes with *tilleul* (a linden-tree). They never fail to bring them together, placing the *glaieul* under the *tilleul*—a thing I would not do in my garden for the world; my poor gladiolus would fare but badly in such a situation. It is very fortunate they don't sometimes put the *tilleul* under the *glaieul* (the linden-tree under the gladiolus): it would rhyme quite as well.

But let us return to our rose. We will not call it the *Queen of Flowers;* we will avoid all the common-places of which it has been the subject, and over which it has triumphed. Let us look at it only, and say what we see. There is no country without roses; from Sweden to the Coasts of Africa, from Kamtschatka to Bengal, or on the Mountains of Mexico, the rose flourishes in all climates and in all soils; it is one of the grand prodigalities of nature.

The rose-tree before which we now stop is covered with white blossoms. Others bear flowers, varying from the palest rose to the deepest crimson and purple, from the most delicate straw colour, to the most brilliant yellow. Blue is the only colour nature has refused it. There are very few blue flowers.

Pure blue is a privilege which, with some few exceptions, nature only grants to the flowers of the fields and meadows. She is parsimonious in blue: blue is the colour of the heavens, and she only gives it to the poor, whom she loves above all others.

Botanists, who take no account of either colours or perfumes, pretend that double roses are monsters. What shall we call the botanists? We will exchange a few words with the botanists before we come to the end of this journey.

This rose-tree was once a wild rose, or eglantine, which, in some obscure corner of a wood, decked itself with little simple roses, each composed of five petals. One day, its head and its arms were cut off; and then the skin of one of the stumps which it was allowed to retain was opened, and between the bark and the wood, a little morsel of the bark of another rose-tree was insinuated, upon which was a scarcely perceptible bud. From that day all its strength, all its sap, all its life, have been consecrated to the nourishment of this bud. The wound is closed, but the cicatrice may still be seen. This eglantine bears no flowers of its own: it is a slave, who works for a haughty master. That beautiful tuft of leaves and flowers are not its flowers or its leaves.

But observe! there is, upon the green stem, just below the graft, a rose-bud, which begins to peep out. That bud will become a branch; that branch will belong to it. Oh, then nature will resume her rights: the tyrant above, the beautiful

rose-tree, the cultivated rose-tree, will wait in vain for the tribute hitherto paid to him; the sap will no longer ascend to him—it will all be kept for this dear scion; there is not too much for it. But the gardener has perceived this attempt at rebellion: he has cut off the pretender, and all is restored to order. A few days, however, after this, the rose-tree again appeared to languish; the brilliancy of the monarch was diminished; the foliage looked yellow and faded; and yet the stem of the eglantine was shining and smooth. Seek for the cause. The poor slave is ingenious and obstinate: he has caused a shoot to glide along under the earth, and only allowed it to see the day at a distance from its parent. Go back two or three steps, and behind that gilly-flower you will see a little rose-bush, growing in shade and silence. It is like what its father was; like him it has flexible branches and narrow leaves. Wait a year, and it will become an eglantine. Rub its leaves, and you will find they exhale a pine-apple odour, peculiar to one species of eglantine. Such was its father when he had branches and leaves of his own. Here it is in bud; here it is in blossom.

But the despot we left yonder is dead, and died of a horrible death: he died of hunger. The revolted slave who supported him, has, for a length of time, conducted under ground, all his sap to his well-beloved offspring. That beautiful crown of double flowers is withered: he himself, the poor slave, is sick, and will soon die; for he has kept nothing for himself. But he dies free: he dies avenged. He leaves a strong, young, and vigorous offspring upon which the little eglantine blossoms of the woods will burst forth next year.

Our white rose-tree is not in this situation. The eglantine which bears and nourishes it appears to be resigned to its fate; indeed, we might even say it is proud of its slavery. There are other slaves in the world who have no wish to break their chains when they are well gilded. Our eglantine seems to take pride in its beautiful crown.

But what emerald is that concealed in the heart of that rose? The emerald is living: it is a cetonia;* it is a flat, square insect, with hard wings, like those of a cockchafer,

* *Cetonia aurata.*—Ed.

and brilliant as a precious stone. Turn it up: its under side is of a still more beautiful colour; it is another precious stone, more violet than the ruby, more red than the amethyst. The cetonia, or rose-beetle, lives scarcely anywhere but in roses. A rose is its house and its bed. It feeds on roses. When it has eaten its house, it flies away in search of another, but it prefers white roses to all the rest. If by chance you find it upon another rose, which is rarely the case, neither its abode nor its bed are to its mind. It would inspire you with the same pity that you would feel for a ruined banker, obliged to dwell in the fourth story, and to eat soup and bouilli, as his only banquet. It feels sad and humiliated by it; but still, breathing creatures must live. There are people who resign themselves to a worse fate than this.

Twenty flies of different species and colours, are to be found upon different parts of the rose-tree; but I pay no attention to them—they are there by chance. They travel as you do; they trifle as I do. I only take heed of the natives of the country: I shall meet with the others elsewhere. We are not yet ready to quit our rose-tree; for strange things are going on in it at this moment.

Where are you, my dear friend? I have no idea where; but I very much doubt if the country in which you are sojourning be as smiling as my rose-tree; and, particularly, whether the inhabitants be as handsome, brilliant, and happy as the inhabitants of my rose-tree. And is it nothing to see living beings happy? But, to a certainty, you are viewing nothing so extraordinary as that which I see at this moment.

At the extremities of the young shoots of the rose-tree are myriads of very small insects, of a reddish green, which entirely cover the branch, and seem motionless: they are aphides or vine-fretters, which are born within a line or two of the place where they now are, and which never venture to travel one inch in the course of their lives. They have a little proboscis, which they plunge into the epidermis of the branch, and by means of which they suck certain juices which nourish them. They will not eat the rose-tree. There are more than five hundred assembled upon one inch of the branch, and neither foliage nor branch seems to suffer much.

Almost every plant is inhabited by aphides differing from those of others. Those of the elder are of a velvety black; those of the apricot are of a glossy black; those of the oak are of a bronze colour; those of gooseberry-trees are like mother-of-pearl; upon the absinthe they are spotted white and brown: on the field-sorrel, black and green; upon the birch, black, and another shade of green; upon the privet, of a yellowish green; and upon the pear-tree, coffee-coloured.

All enjoy a life sufficiently calm. You scarcely ever see an insect of this kind who is vagabond enough to pass from one branch to another. They sometimes go so far as to make the tour of the branch they dwell upon; but everything leaves us to believe that this is only done in the effervescence of ill-regulated youth, or under the empire of some passion. These outbreaks are extremely rare. Some of these aphides, however, have wings; but these wings only come at a ripe age, and they do not abuse them. The only serious care that seems to occupy the life of the aphis, is the changing of its clothes. It changes its skin, in fact, four times before it becomes a perfect aphis; something like us men who try on two or three characters before we fix upon one, although in general, we preserve three during our whole lives:—one which we exhibit; one which we fancy we have; and another which we really have.

THE APHIS.

When the aphides have finished changing their skins, there only remains one duty to fulfil, which is to multiply their species; but they take very little heed about that: they have not, as quadrupeds have, to suckle their young—as birds, to hatch their eggs—or, as other insects, to enclose them in a cavern with necessary aliments. The aphis produces its little ones whilst sucking its branch; and it never turns round to look at the offspring it has given birth to. If the mother shows but little anxiety for the little one, the little one only returns the same amount of filial love that it has received of maternal love. It sets out, descends below the

rest, takes its rank, and plunges its little trunk into the green skin of the rose-tree. There issue thus about a hundred from a single mother, who all fall in regularly below their predecessors, and begin to eat. In ten or eleven days they change their skins four times; on the twelfth day, in their turn, they begin to produce little ones who take their rank, and themselves become prolific towards the twelfth day from their birth. The aphides of the poppy are more precocious; in seven or eight days they have changed their vestments four times, and enjoyed what I should call the happiness of being parents, if they were not quite indifferent about the matter.

But, my good friend, you will say, upon reading this passage of my journey, there is an important deficiency here: you profess to describe the lives of these aphides, and you don't say a word of their loves or their nuptials. I have here, you will add, an immense advantage over you. I relate to you, of every nation, a thousand whimsical or curious ceremonies connected with marriage. Yes, my excellent friend, I may answer, I could remind you of the loves of those two spiders, which, when starting for my journey, I fell in with in the corner of my window; but my present business is only with aphides. Aphides are acquainted with neither love nor hymeneals: aphides eat and make little ones, exactly in the manner of Mother Gigogne, who so delighted our childhood. Nature has taken the fancy to free herself, with regard to aphides, from the general law of reproduction. Don't, however, imagine that she shrinks from the difficulty on account of the smallness of these animals. There are other animals which can only be distinguished with the assistance of a microscope, which, in this respect, come within the general rule. Notwithstanding the admiration which the study of insects must create, you must not let this admiration be exercised upon their greater or smaller size. Great and small are only such with relation to ourselves; and when we express astonishment at seeing a perfection in the organs of the invisible cheese-mite, equal to those of the ox or the elephant, it is a false feeling, arising from a false idea.

One of these aphides will produce nearly twenty young ones

in the course of a day; that is to say, a volume ten or twelve times equal to its own body. A single aphis which, at the beginning of the warm weather, would bring into the world ninety aphides, which ninety, twelve days after, would each produce ninety more, would be, in the fifth generation, author of five billions, nine hundred and four millions, nine thousand aphides—which is a tolerable amount. Now, one aphis is, in a year, the source of twenty generations. I very much doubt whether there would be room for them upon all the trees and all the plants in the world. The whole earth would be given up to aphides; but this fecundity, of which there are so many examples in nature, need not alarm us. One poppy plant produces thirty-two thousand seeds, one tobacco plant, three hundred and sixty thousand; each of these seeds producing in its turn thirty-two thousand, or three hundred thousand—would you not think that, at the end of five years the earth would be entirely covered with tobacco and poppies? A carp lays three hundred and fifty

THE CARP

thousand eggs at once. But life and death are nothing but transformations. Death is the aliment of life. These aphides are the game that nourishes other insects, which in turn form the food of the birds we eat. Then we are returned to the elements, and serve as manure to the grass and the flowers, which will produce and feed other aphides.

We need not go far to seek for the enemies of the aphides.

Look! here, quite at his ease, on a rose-bud, is a little insect well known to children: it is shaped like a tortoise, and is about the size of a pea. Naturalists call it a "coccinella," and children know it as the lady-bird. It is now innocent enough; but it has not always been so. Before it became possessed of its pretty form, and its polished shell of orange, yellow, black, or red, sprinkled with black or brown specks, it was a large, flat worm, with six feet, and of a dirty grey colour, marked with a few yellow spots. These worms, which issue from amber-coloured eggs, deposited by the female upon leaves, are no sooner born than they set out in search of aphides. When they have found a branch covered with game, they establish themselves in the midst of it, and are not in want of food till the moment they feel they are about to be transformed; then they attach themselves to some solitary leaf, and wait, in abstinence, till they become veritable lady-birds.

THE LADY-BIRD.

There would still be a superabundance of aphides if the lady-birds were their only enemies. But do you not see, hovering over one of the roses, a fly,* whose two wings move so rapidly that it appears motionless? You would not care to catch it, it so much resembles a bee, or rather a wasp. Its body is striped with yellow and black, but instead of being round like the two insects you dread, it is remarkably flat; besides this, it has only two wings, and I do not believe that any two-winged fly has a sting. It does not seem to take any notice of the aphides which cover the branch near to it. It is a *parvenu*. It has forgotten the humility of its youth, when it had not its rich yellow and black vestments, or, more particularly, its wings. It was formerly a sort of shapeless worm, of a colour not at all striking, a dirty green, with a yellow stripe the whole length of its body

* *Scæva pyrastri.*—Ed.

Placing itself upon a bed of game, this worm seizes the aphides, one after another, with a sort of hollow trident, through which it sucks them, taking particular care to reject the empty dry skin every time. One of these worms eats nearly an aphis a minute; as regards the aphides, the matter appears to be perfectly indifferent to them, not one of them is ever seen to make the least effort to avoid being eaten.

A Roman emperor, who found his end approaching, cried out, in allusion to the custom of decreeing an apotheosis to dead emperors: "I feel that I am becoming a god!" So there is a moment at which this worm feels that it is becoming a fly: and, like the lady-bird, it seeks a solitary place to prepare for this metamorphosis.

Here is a branch on which the aphides are only on one side; to-morrow there will be none at all; the reason of this is, that they are attacked by their most redoubtable enemy, an enemy which the learned and witty Reaumur called the *Lion of the Pucerons.* This is, like the others, flat in form, and is of a cinnamon colour with citron-yellow stripes; it is much more voracious than the two other species of which we have spoken. If one of these worms, by mistake, happens to seize one of his brethren instead of an aphis so much the worse for his brother—it will eat him. It would be losing precious time to replace it upon a branch, and take an aphis instead of it. One can afford very little leisure for so much ceremony, when one has but a fortnight to eat all these fat aphides in! In fact, at the end of a fortnight, it forgets its appetite, and retires into a corner, shuts itself up in a shell of white silk, as large as a pea, which it spins in a very short time. Three weeks afterwards, the shell opens, and there issues from it the most beautiful little creature you ever saw. It is a sort of large fly* of a gay green colour, covered, when it is settled, by long and large wings, of so fine a texture, that its body can be plainly seen through them. These wings, which are of a very pale green, present to the eye fibres, as it were, of a deeper green, which form a network more charming than that of the richest lace; on each side of the head is an eye of a fiery red colour, the splendour of which far surpasses that of precious stones.

* *Chrysopa reticulata.*—Ed. See fig. on p. 58.

The learned formerly found little bunches upon leaves, which excited their attention; these were stems as fine as hairs, supporting a small bud, white like themselves; at other times the buds were found open, like the chalice of a flower; the thing was declared to be a plant by the learned. The learned, however, were wrong; Reaumur made it clear that they were the eggs of that pretty fly of which we have just spoken, before and after the birth of the worm which was afterwards to be transformed into a fly.

I was afraid but now, of seeing the aphides invade the whole earth; I at present begin to fear that there will not be aphides enough to feed all the insects to which they are assigned as game. Nature appears to have partaken of this second fear, and for this reason has suppressed the delays and formalities, ordinarily reputed necessary; aphides must be born, eat, and be eaten in a very few days.

But what is that black animal which is ascending the stem of the rose-tree? It is an ant; it climbs spirally, to avoid the thorns; there it is upon the branch that is covered by the aphides. Is this another enemy? Why, La Fontaine told you it fed upon worms and insects; there, it is upon them, but it does not devour them. As aphides eat, they secrete a sweet liquor of which ants are very fond, and this one is come to regale itself—it is a little black milkmaid, who comes to milk some little green cows, which pasture in a meadow of the size of a rose-leaf.

There is a bee which has glided into a rose; it is not long before it comes out again, and flies away; its hind feet are loaded with a yellow dust, which it has abstracted from the heart of the flower. That yellow dust, mixed with the honey which it disgorges, will be the paste destined for the worms which are to become young bees. Do not fancy, however, that this dust has no other destination. It is now time to speak of the loves of the roses.

We will abstain from allusions to, as we said before, the apocryphal loves of the Rose and the Butterfly. The butterfly who lights upon a rose, seldom comes there for any other purpose than to deposit eggs, which will become caterpillars that will eat the rose. The loves, then, of which I will speak are real loves, and are the most charming in the

world. Figure to yourself that all those roses which bloom in the garden, pale purple or purple violet, yellow or nasturtium colour, white, or mixed with purple and white, conceal from your eyes numbers of innocent loves.

The ancients placed dryads and hamadryads in trees; there are nymphs quite as charming in roses. Let us go back to the rose-tree of the woods. Its flower is composed of five leaves or five petals: in the middle are some delicate threads, supporting little yellow masses, these are the stamens; these threads surround a sort of little green egg, which is called an ovary, which contains the seed or grains; the grains are eggs, which the plants leave for the earth and the sun to hatch, as turtles do, when they deposit their eggs in the sand. The mass which surmounts the stamens is covered with that yellow dust with which the bee that has just disappeared over the wall had loaded its feet. Every grain of that dust is a skin which contains a much finer dust, which fecundates the pistil. When once the pistil fecundates, the nuptial bed is taken down—the leaves of the rose fade and fall, one by one; the stamens become dry, and disappear. The ovary enlarges, and becomes an oblong fruit of the shape of an olive, green at first, then yellow, then orange, then scarlet; then, some day, the fruit bursts, and grains of a gold colour, containing eternal generations of rose-trees, fall upon the earth, and there germinate. The little nymph who inhabits the rose has from fifteen to twenty lovers; but all the inhabitants of flowers have not a similar harem: that of the pink has but ten husbands; the fair inhabitant of the tulip is obliged to be content with six; the nymph of the Iris has only three; that of the lilac two; of the red Valerian only one; she who has chosen for a retreat the sumptuous poppy, has around her no less than a hundred eager lovers. And don't believe, my good friend, that these are lovers invented by versifiers. Cut off the stamens of a rose, and isolate it; you will see the petals lose their splendid colour, become rusty, and fall; but far from enlarging, and being brighter in colour, the pistil also will sink barren. The hangings of the nuptial bed will serve it for a winding-sheet; the rose will die without leaving any posterity. The double rose is a coquette of an entirely unique species; you have read fairy tales,

in which a magician changes into trees or flowers her rejected lovers; have we not, besides, in mythology, Daphne changed into a laurel, Clytie into a sunflower? Did not Narcissus and Adonis become flowers, to which they left their names? Well, every one of the rose-leaves (beyond five) which surround the nymph who dwells in the double rose, is one of these lovers—each of the petals is made of one of the stamens that she had. Certain roses are so double that they have not one stamen left, and then they never have any seeds. Our white rose, which has but five rows of petals, has preserved a few of its lovers.

Then we left the white rose-tree; and, taking three steps, we found ourselves in a hostelry, which has the advantage of being our own home. And you, my friend, where are you going to dine? or, rather, where do you not dine? Where do you sleep? or rather, where do you not sleep?

Ancient robbers upon the highways observed that they were often imprisoned, that they were sometimes hung, and they found it necessary to introduce some modification into one of the most ancient professions; they discarded those brown vests, those red pantaloons, those pistol bedecked girdles, which are only met with in melodramas, and they assumed a cotton cap and a white apron; they took out the licence of an aubergiste, and continue to plunder upon the high roads, the theatre of their ancient exploits, but now under the immediate protection of their ancient enemies, the authorities and gendarmes.

In which of these caverns are you this evening—if even you are happy enough to have reached one? What suspicious food is presented to your appetite? Do you think you are certain the sheets of your bed have never been used by any one else? And with what insects are you about to share your couch?

LETTER VI.

SAVANTS—THE RESEDA OR MIGNONETTE—THE MARSH-MALLOW AND THE BAOBAB.

> Savants are men, who, in their greatest success, only contrive to get deeper into the mud than other people.—*Language of Science, and the Language of Old Associations.*

A BRISK shower having driven me in from the garden, I sit me down quietly then in my study, and amuse myself with a species as curious as any of those we shall have opportunities of observing in either your voyage or mine. I propose saying a little about *savants.*

You cannot but remember that smiling portion of your life, full of gaiety, sports, and affections—I mean childhood; that childhood always too soon given up to pedants, who aggravate children for ten years, in order to render them aggravating for the rest of their lives.

Represent to yourself one of our school play-hours: all those open, ingenuous, cheerful countenances; these engaged in running and jumping, those with their kites, others in throwing and catching balls, and others, again, skilfully striking marbles with other marbles from a great distance. Recreation is the true education that belongs to this age; by it we become healthy, vigorous, active, and brave. But the fatal hour has struck.

A man, with black clothes and a yellow visage, appears in the court. Everything becomes silent, everything stops, everything is sad. The sports of boyhood must all cease. And why? No doubt, for the sake of learning a trade, an occupation, to assure beforehand the independence of the whole of their lives. Not at all.

There are amusements for a riper age as well as for childhood. Youth has no amusements: it despises them, it does not want them—it requires happiness.

Childhood in nowise desires other ages to partake of its amusements. Youth would be furious if others wished to take away a portion of its felicity. But mature age insists upon having partakers of its amusements; which arises from the circumstance of these amusements being very tiresome. In fact, these said amusements consist in nothing but reading and re-reading, for the hundredth time, the same Latin and Greek books.

For my part, I cannot see why each age should not be left in the free enjoyment of its own pleasures, or why children should be tormented during the whole of their joyous age, by being taught a game which may amuse them at an age they are not certain of attaining. I cannot see why they should be forced to admire what they don't understand; why an entirely literary education should be given to people who are destined to be dispersed through all the conditions of human life; or why literary studies should be confined, during ten years, to the learning of the only two languages that are never spoken.

Jean Jacques Rousseau knew but very little Latin. I have no need to tell you why Homer did not understand Latin at all.

That which savants do with regard to children, they do

with regard to everything they come near. They render everything wearisome, dry, stiff, and pretentious.

They cannot leave flowers alone—they put them in starch. See a savant enter a smiling meadow or a perfumed, blooming garden; listen to him: you would take a disgust for both meadow and garden.

They began by forming for those graceful things called flowers, three barbarous languages, which they afterwards mixed, in order to compound one still more barbarous; then every savant brought his little contributions of new barbarisms, as was done among the ancients to those heaps of stones placed by the road-sides, to which every traveller was obliged to add a pebble at least.

I was about to write, at hazard, such of the words of this language made by these gentlemen as occur to me. But you would not only say, is it not sad work to see flowers thus treated, *that festival of the sight*, as the ancient Greeks called them. But I am sure you would not read two lines of them; therefore, I will let you off with half-a-dozen—Mesocarps, quinquelocular, infundibuliform, squammiflora, guttiferæ, monocotyledons, &c. &c. &c.*

Have you enough? You will never make a botanist; you would have to store your memory with an endless nomenclature like the above, with the satisfaction of knowing that the learned are adding to it daily, and that when acquired you had not gained the name of a single flower.

As to the names of flowers, look, at the foot of that wall, at these bunches of mignonette, or reseda. Linnæus, who fully played his part in the barbarisms, but who considered flowers in a friendly light, and who, of all savants, has least ill-treated them—Linnæus said that the odour of the reseda was ambrosia. Contemplate while you can its green and fawn-coloured spikes, inhale its sweet odour; for here comes a savant—there comes another—the reseda is about to be transformed! In the first place, there is no such thing as odour. Botanists do not admit of odour. For them, odour signifies nothing, nothing more than colour does.

Colour and odour are two luxuries; two superfluities of which the learned have deprived flowers.

* In the original, more than a page is filled with botanical terms.—Ed.

† *Reseda odorata.* Introduced from Africa in Napoleon's Egyptian campaign.—Ed.

Our savants are desirous that all flowers should resemble those which they dry in their herbals—horrible cemeteries, in which flowers are buried with ostentatious epitaphs. One of these savants looks at the plant and says, "That is a capparis, of the family of the capparides, without stipulæ. The petals of the corolla alternate with the sepals of the calyx; the filaments are hypogynous; the pistil is stipitate, and formed of the union of three carpels, the ovules attached to the three trophosperms; its seeds are often reniform, and have an endosperm ——"

"Gently! gently!" cries the other savant; "the reseda is not a capparis. The reseda is an euphorbia, according to Mr. Lindley, and a cistus, in my opinion. The calyx is a common involucrum; the ovary globular, seldom unilocular; the seeds are enveloped in a fleshy endosperm."

"I admit the endosperm," replies the other savant, "and I allow that it is fleshy; but I maintain that the reseda belongs to the capparides. I will further say that it shows but little of a botanist to make an euphorbiaceous plant of it."

But let us stop! We should tear our sweet mignonette to tatters. Listen to a savant upon another subject.

He is speaking of the guimauve, or dwarf mallow,* a little creeping plant, with round leaves and rose-coloured blossoms, that you will have great trouble to find in the grass. Listen!

"The calyx is gamosepalous; the anthers are reniform and unilocular; the pistil is composed of several carpels, often verticillated; the fruits form a plurilocular capsule, which opens in as many valves as there are monosperm or polysperm cells; the seeds are generally without endosperm, with foliaceous cotyledons."

You understand nothing of this, though, perhaps, if you have an extraordinary verbal memory, you may retain some of the words. Then request the savant to tell you something about the *baobab*.

The baobab, or *Adansonia*,† is the largest tree in the world; it may be taken at a distance for a forest; its trunk is often a hundred feet in circumference; it is asserted that some exist in Senegal that are five thousand years old.

Hear the savant give a description of a baobab:—

* *Malva rotundifolia.*—Ed. † *Adansonia digitata.*—Ed.

"The calyx gamosepalous; the anthers are reniform and unilocular; the pistil is composed of several carpels, often verticillated; the fruits form a plurilocular capsule, which opens in as many valves as there are monosperm and polysperm cells ——"

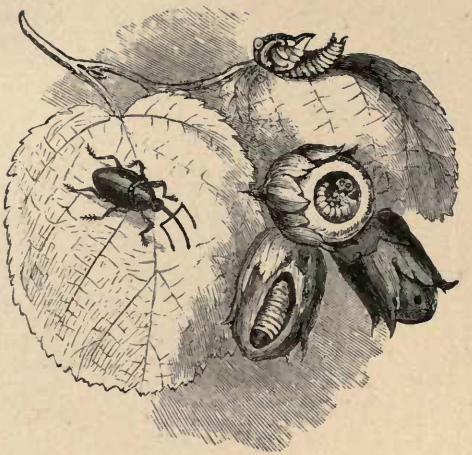
You stop the savant. "I beg your pardon, learned sir; it is of the dwarf mallow you are speaking, or, at least, you said just the same of the dwarf mallow but an instant ago."

"Dwarf mallow or baobab," replies the savant, "it is, for us, absolutely the same thing; we do not observe those differences which strike the vulgar, of which the dignity of science will not allow us to take notice."

Savants acknowledge neither size, odour, colour, nor flavour: with them the plum-tree is a cherry-tree, the apricot is a plum: these very men, who, in other cases, give ten names to the same plant, call all these *prunus;* the almond-tree and the peach-tree have but one name between them—*amygdalus.*

And then you know what charming names the pretty flowers of our fields have received, no one knows whence, except from their own sweet nature: they know nothing of paquerettes (Easter daisy); marguerites (the prettiest name for daisies); vergiss-meinnicht (forget-me-not). Marguerites and paquerettes are *asters;* and the pretty forget-me-not, with all its delightful associations, is loaded with the name of *myosotis occipioides.* Can you imagine what a rage you would have been in, my dear friend, if some godfather had insisted upon calling your pretty little Mathilde, *Petronella,* or Rosalba?

The rain has ceased, the sun has dispersed the clouds, and makes the drops on the leaves glitter like so many diamonds; the drooping branches recover their natural position; a linnet sings in a hawthorn. The savants may settle their disputes by themselves.



LETTER VII.

NUT-TREE—NUT-WEEVIL—WHAT IS PROPERTY?

THE ardour of the sun drives us to the friendly shade of the trees; and here, on the verge of the thicket, is a nut-tree which arrests our steps for a few minutes.

I have told you, my friend, of the little nymphs to whom roses and other flowers are as a grotto or a nuptial bed, wherein their loves are concealed by rich purple curtains. All do not enjoy the same facilities; all do not find their lover and their husband in the same chalice, under the same leaves; it is evident that roses, and a vast number of other flowers which thus unite the two sexes in the same corolla, are like the Guèbres, who contracted marriages among brothers and sisters; if you were travelling that way, you would be mighty proud to meet with some rude monument which might recal the memory of this now forgotten usage.

The nut-tree* is not thus constituted; the male and female flowers are not united in one corolla, but they are both born

* *Corylus Avellana.*—ED.

upon the same tree. The male flowers appear the first, generally about the beginning of February, a long time before the females venture forth. They are long catkins of a pale yellow, in the form of little close clusters, which hang from the upper extremities of the branches; shivering through the dreary season, they await the coming of the female flowers; some wither, die with cold, and fall off, before these deign to show themselves; but the male flowers are much the more numerous. The female flowers, placed beneath the catkins, begin to appear; these are green, scaly buds, terminated by a very small tip of beautiful crimson red; it is this little bunch or tuft which receives and retains the yellow dust that falls from the catkins; and *that* is the way nuts are made.

The hazel reminds us of four pretty verses of Virgil—

> "Populus Alcidæ gratissima, vitis Iaccho,
> Formosæ myrtus Veneri, sua laurea Phœbo.
> Phyllis amat corylos, illas dùm Phyllis amabit,
> Nec myrtus vincet corylos nec laurea Phœbi."

"Hercules loves the poplar, and Bacchus the branches of the vine; the myrtle is consecrated to Venus, and the laurel is cherished by Apollo. But Phyllis loves nut-trees, and, while she loves them, nut-trees shall triumph over both the myrtle of Venus and the laurel of Apollo."

Great virtues were for a long time attributed, nay, still are attributed in the provinces, to a hazel-branch; it is pretended that a wand of a nut-tree, cut in a certain season, with certain ceremonies, and in the hands of a man purified after certain methods, points of itself to a part of the earth in which is concealed either a mine or a spring. However far off you may be, you will not easily find a more singular belief than that.

Upon the nut-tree, as well as upon the trees which surround it, I can see countless numbers of insects, without reckoning those which, by their small size, escape my sight; there are some upon the leaves, some under the leaves, and some in the leaves, that is to say, in the thickness of the leaves.

Between the two membranes of the leaves of the nut-tree, little caterpillars live, eat, attain their growth, and spin a small web rather larger than a grain of millet seed. Almost

all trees, almost all plants, have insects which thus live in the interior of their leaves. A worm which insinuates itself into the leaves of the white lungwort, comes out in his day, metamorphosed into a little beetle of a whitish colour, in the form of a weevil; the one which escapes from the thickness of the leaves of the mallow, after having lived and been metamorphosed there, is of a violet colour; another worm feeds upon the parenchyma between the two membranes of the leaves of the henbane, which is a violent poison, and comes out transformed into a fly.

But let us return to the caterpillar which dwells in the leaves of the nut-tree. A little moth has laid one egg on each leaf of the nut-tree; from this egg a caterpillar issues, which, armed with good teeth, makes in the epidermis of the leaf a wound by means of which it introduces itself into its thickness; when once there, it advances, eating right and left; until there remains so little of the leaf, that, by holding it up to the sun, we can plainly perceive the miner. When it has attained its full growth, it shuts itself up in a web of silk, from which it issues at a later period, a moth: this insect, smaller than an ordinary gnat, when seen through a microscope, appears to be the most richly clad, perhaps, of all the moths known; its head is ornamented with two small white tufts, its two upper wings are striped each with seven little bands, alternately of gold and silver.

All their species do not travel in their leaf in the same manner; the worm which lives only in the leaves of thistles, eats straight before it; therefore its road has the appearance of a gallery, very narrow at the beginning, and widening in proportion as it is itself developed. The worms of the leaves of the lilac live in society in the same leaf.

Some of the fruits of the nut-tree, in spite of their cuirass of wood, are inhabited as well as the leaves; the flower is not yet faded when an insect* comes and deposits one of its eggs in it; the worm which issues from this egg, easily introduces itself into the fruit, which is scarcely formed and quite soft; there it feeds upon the kernel, which grows as fast as it grows, and enlarges in proportion as it enlarges; but in the meantime the shell is formed, and hardens so as sometimes

* *Balaninus Nucum.*—Ed.

to brave the teeth of man. This El Dorado, in which the worm, sheltered from the inclemency of the seasons, had enjoyed at discretion the food which best suited it, has become a prison: it must get out, for it is in the earth that its metamorphosis must take place; nature has given it, at the age it has then attained, teeth which enable it to make a perfectly round hole in the walls of its prison, by which it effects its escape. When you see a nut with a hole thus made, you may be sure that the worm which inhabited it has either left it or is about to leave it; the hole by which it entered is long since cicatrised.

When we examine thus the lives of these little creatures, divided into two such distinct ages, we abandon ourselves to singular reveries. At first, it is a worm of an ugly shape, condemned to an humble, obscure, and laborious life, and surrounded by enemies. It soon ceases to eat; it spins itself a winding-sheet of silk, and encloses itself in it. There it is, as far as our eyes can convince us, as dead as it can be; but wait a few days, and it issues from the winding-sheet clothed in the richest colours, with brilliant wings which enable it to fly above that earth upon which it had seemed painfully to crawl. It finds in the sweet air a female beautiful and happy as itself, and their loves terminate only with their existence.

This life which we lead upon earth, is it really our *perfect state?* Is that which we call death really the end of life? Have we not also to hope for celestial wings, with which to hover about the sun and beautiful stars—above the miseries, passions, and wants, of a first existence?

Bernardin de St. Pierre, who really loved flowers and trees, and who often speaks of them very delightfully, adopted a point of view which, necessarily, often led him to describe things very differently from what they really are: he thought that man was the centre and the object of the entire creation; that everything had been made for him. Sometimes, things presented themselves which he found it very difficult to reconcile with this system so generally adopted—and I don't know why. He somewhere says that nature has only placed odoriferous flowers in the grass upon low stems, or upon shrubs, but that not one bloomed upon a lofty tree. Bernardin de St. Pierre forgot the acacia, which often rises to a height of

sixty or eighty feet. It was this same system that made him say, "*At the sight of men, animals are struck with love or fear.*" He left out a third impression, which many animals experience at the sight of man—*hunger, and a great desire to eat him.*

Ask the first passer-by, provided he be of the country, to whom that fine acacia belongs? He will answer you, without hesitation, "That acacia belongs to M. Stephen." In fact, I have agreements, in due form, that this acacia is mine. Now, is notthis a cruel sarcasm? This tree is more than a hundred years old, and has preserved all its vigour and its youth; whilst I—I am thirty-six years of age, or rather there are already of the mysterious number of years which have been granted me, or inflicted upon me, thirty-six which I have spent, and which I no longer have. I have already begun to die: I have lost two teeth; and lengthened vigils fatigue me. This tree has seen three generations born and die beneath its shade: if I become very aged, if I escape accidents and diseases, if I die from having lived, I shall see it flourish thirty times more; and then, some of the children who are now playing at marbles, and whom we are teaching Latin in spite of themselves, whom we now coax with sugared bread and butter, but who will then be men, will shut me up in a deal box, and place me by the side of others under the earth, in order to make more room for those who are upon it, until another generation which they have brought up for that purpose, shall squeeze them into similar boxes, and place them beside us.

And I call this tree mine! Ten more generations will live and die beneath its shade; and yet I call this tree mine. And I can neither reach nor see that nest which a bird has built upon one of its highest branches. I call this tree mine, and I cannot gather one of its blossoms; and yet I call this tree mine!

Mine!

There is scarcely anything which I call mine which will not last much longer than I shall: there is not a single button of my gaiters that is not destined to survive me many years.

What a strange thing is this *property* of which men are so

envious! When I had *nothing of my own*, I had forests and meadows, and the sea, and the sky with all its stars; since I purchased this old house and this garden, I have no longer anything but this house and this garden.

Property is a contract by which you renounce everything that is not contained within four certain walls.

I remember an old wood near to the house in which I was born: what days have I passed under its thick shade, in its green alleys; what violets I have gathered in it in the month of March, and what lilies of the valley in the month of May; what strawberries, blackberries, and nuts, I have eaten in it; what butterflies and lizards I have chased and caught there; what nests I have discovered; how I have there admired the stars which in an evening used to appear to blossom in the tops of the lofty trees, and in the morning the sun which glided in golden dust through that thick dome of foliage! What sweet perfumes, and what still sweeter reveries, have I there inhaled! what verses have I there made! how I have there read and re-read *her letters!* How often have I gone thither at the close of day, to recline upon a little knoll covered with trees, to see the glorious sun set, his oblique rays colouring with red and gold the white trunks of the birch-trees which surround me! *This wood was not mine: it belonged to an old bedridden marquis, who had, perhaps, never been in it in his life—and yet it belonged to him!*

Far from being the master of nature, as so many philosophers, poets, and moralists pretend, man is her assiduous slave; property is one of the baits by means of which he burdens himself with a crowd of singular taxes. Look yonder at that man cutting his hay, how tired he is: the sweat pours from his brow! He is cutting *his* hay for *his* horse—he is proud and happy.

Man is appointed by nature to harvest her grain, and to sow it again in suitable soils, and to dig the earth round the foot of trees in order that they may receive the sweet and salutary influences of sun and rain.

The poor man has, in every moderately inhabited city, a public library, and consequently has at his command from fifteen to twenty thousand volumes; should be become rich,

THE WOOD.—P. 46.

he will purchase a library of books for himself; that is to say, he will only have five or six hundred, but what joy and pride will arise from the possession of them!

You are poor—the sea is yours with its solemn noises, the grand voices of its winds, the aspect of its imposing rage, and of its still more imposing calms; it is yours, but it likewise belongs to others: at some future period, when, by dint of labour, mental exertion, perhaps baseness, you shall have become more or less rich, you will have a little marble basin constructed in your garden, or at least you will be eager to buy and keep in your house a vase containing a couple of gold fish.

There are moments at which I ask myself whether by chance our minds may not be so turned that we call poverty that which is splendour and riches, and opulence that which is misery and destitution.

LETTER VIII.

LILY—ICHNEUMON-FLY—THE POPPY.

I BELIEVE it is not satisfactorily known what kind of bulbous roots were deified among the Egyptians. Lilies, hyacinths, and tulips, appear to me to have much greater rights to these honours than the garlic and onions of our kitchens. The Latins, however, thought that it was to the latter this elevated rank belonged.

> "O sanctas gentes, quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis
> Numina."

"People holy and happy enough to see their gods spring up in their gardens."

The white lily has many enemies; the poets have misused it equally with the rose. I do not know who first thought of degrading it by rendering it a political or party symbol.

It would indeed be difficult to say how many governments and revolutions there have been in France since that tuft of lilies was planted in my garden, how many systems have been lauded to the skies, and dragged through the dirt.

The lilies in the arms of France were not taken from the lilies of our gardens: they bear no resemblance to them. Some authors who have written volumes on this subject, say that they are the yellow iris of the marshes; others, that the *fleurs de lis* were originally bees; while, again, others contend that they were lance heads.

Nevertheless, the lilies have not escaped the fate of other political flowers, such as the violet, the imperial, and the red pink; all have been, by turns, proscribed and recalled, multiplied to excess or pitilessly rooted up, in the flower-beds of the Tuileries, and generally placed under the watchful care of the police, considered as suspicious, hostile to power, and mixed up with several conspiracies. The parties and the men who planted and proscribed them are long since dead, and almost forgotten. And yet, every spring, these poor flowers, returned to private life, continue to bloom again in their proper seasons.

One insect alone appears to have taken possession of the lily, and established its abode in it. It is a little beetle, whose form is of an elongated square, with black body and claws, and hard elytra, or wings, of a brilliant scarlet. There is no lily that is not an asylum for some of these. They are called Crioceres. When you have hold of one, press it in your hand, and you will hear a creaking noise, which you may at first take for a cry, but which is nothing but the rubbing of its lower rings against the sheaths of its wings.

It did not always wear this brilliant costume—this costume under which it scarcely eats, and that very daintily —this costume under which it appears to have nothing to do but to strut about and make love. It was at first a sort of flat worm, with six feet, of a kind of yellow mixed with brown, which dwelt likewise then upon the leaves of the lily, but which then led a very different life. It was then as greedy and gluttonous as it is now abstemious and delicate. But that was because it had two powerful reasons for eating. The

leaves of the lily which it has eaten issue from its body almost without alteration, as if they had been crushed in a mortar. By a particular disposition of its body, this paste of leaves falls upon it, and forms for it a house, or a cuirass, which conceals it entirely. There comes, however, a day which brings other cares. Spring, and its season, will soon return. It is pleasing neither in form nor colour. It ceases to eat, shakes its strange vestment, walks about in an agitated manner, descends and buries itself in the earth. Some months after, it comes out shining, lustrous, as brilliant as you now see it, richly clothed in the most beautiful china-like gloss. Full of confidence in themselves, the males and females seek each other, and soon meet. Then the males die. The females have still something to do: they lay their eggs—which at first are of a reddish colour, but afterwards brown—and fasten them to the under-side of the leaves of the lily; then they, in their turn, die. When born, their children will find abundance of the food that is necessary for them.

What! already withered leaves! I stoop to pick up these three or four dead ones. The leaves move, and—fly away! But there is no wind to carry them away thus. These leaves are a moth,* to which nature has given the form, the colour, the disposition, the perfect figure, of three or four dried leaves, with their shades and their fibres. Under its first form, it is a pretty large caterpillar, of a dark colour, grey and brown, with brown hairs, and a fleshy brown horn at the extremity of its body.

Apropos of caterpillars, Pliny says that the Romans ate a sort of large white worm,† found in the trunks of old oak-trees; and that they formed a very highly esteemed dish. They were fattened for some time on meal before they were served up to the sumptuous tables of the wealthy Romans. This must have been a horrible *ragoût*—if, by-the-bye, people who, like you and me, eat oysters, have any right to deem anything disgusting.

Here is a caterpillar which seems to have set out on its

* *Gastropacha quercifolia.*—Ed.

† Probably the larva of the Goat-moth, (*Cossus ligniperda,*) or the Stag-beetle, *Lucanus cervus.*)—Ed.

travels; in fact, it is not at home here. I recognise it now: it is striped with pale blue and yellow, spotted with black. It comes from the kitchen garden yonder, behind that screen of poplars; for there is nothing here that suits it. It lives upon the leaves of the cabbage tribe, which it shares with other green caterpillars, which are metamorphosed into those white butterflies so common in our gardens and fields. I do not know what sort of a butterfly this becomes. I will catch it, and imprison it, to witness its metamorphosis.* But what is going on now? A little fly,† of a reddish-brown colour, whose body seems to be attached to its corselet by a slender thread only, has pounced upon the caterpillar, which appears to be not at all inconvenienced by it, but keeps on its way. It is most likely breakfast time, and it is in search of a cabbage. But what is the fly about? What does it want? Is it a fly of prey? Does it mean, like a little eagle, to carry off the caterpillar as a meal for itself and its young ones? The caterpillar weighs twenty times as much as it does—that is impossible. But the fly is armed with a sting twice as long as its whole body, and as fine as a hair. It is an enemy. It is going to kill the caterpillar with that formidable weapon, and, without doubt, eat it. It raises its sting, and this slender hair separates into three parts, in its whole length: two are hollow, and are the halves of a sheath for the third, which is a sharp, toothed wimble. It darts it into the body of the caterpillar, which appears to perceive or know nothing of the matter. It soon withdraws its sword, returns it to the scabbard, flies off, and disappears. The caterpillar did not stop; nor does it stop. It is going to find its cloth laid, and an excellent breakfast ready. In a few days, it will descend into the earth to go through its metamorphosis; but if I do not shut it up, in order to ascertain what sort of a butterfly it becomes, my expectations would be disappointed. The fly which stung it, and which naturalists call the *ichneumon*, has only laid an egg in its body. That sword, the

* It is transformed into one of those white butterflies that are so common in this country as well as in France.—Ed.

† The ichneumon that generally attacks the cabbage caterpillar, is *Microgaster glomeratus*. The author, however, describes an entirely different insect, *Pimpla manifestata*.—Ed.

third part of a hair, is hollow, and has deposited an egg in an interior part of the caterpillar, where this operation does it no harm. From this egg issues a worm, which consumes the caterpillar very slowly. The latter feels ill at ease, loses its appetite, and makes its cocoon; but, in its cocoon, its troublesome guest never ceases to devour it, till, in its turn, it is metamorphosed, and becomes a fly similar to that which we saw lay the egg. It pierces the cocoon of the caterpillar, and flies away in search of a male, and after that of a caterpillar, in which it may deposit its eggs. The males are without the long, sting-looking wimble.

Among the parasites whom you meet with yonder, as you might have done here, my friend, do you think you shall find any so extraordinary in their manner of living upon the world?

Each species of ichneumon, of those which lay in caterpillars, has its favourite caterpillar. There are some so small that they lay in an egg of a butterfly, into which they insinuate their wimble. The worm is born in the egg, and there finds plenty of nourishment—until, changed into a fly, it breaks the shell of it to take flight.

There are in our gardens, and among those who pretend to love them, good sorts of folks, who are a little like you, my friend. Their estimation of a flower rises in proportion with its rarity, and the distance from which it has been brought. I have often met with these curiosity-seekers and amateurs, people who find in possession no other pleasure but that despicable one of knowing that others do not possess—people who have flowers, not for the sake of looking at them, but showing them. Their most cherished flowers—those which were shown me with the most ostentation—those which served as a pretext for the most disdainful tone towards me—were scarce plants, it is true, but of so little brilliancy in themselves, and so completely effaced by other more common plants, that I consider myself, a man—good, excellent, and full of mildness and benignity—not to have yielded, except in one single instance, to the temptation of saying to their ostentatious owner—

"Is that plant very scarce, sir?"

"Oh yes, extremely scarce, sir."

"Well, I am very glad to hear that, however."

"Why so, sir?"

"Do you fancy that you alone possess it, sir?"

"Yes, sir, I am satisfied of that; nobody has one but myself."

"I am enchanted to hear you say so."

"You are polite; but why do you say so, sir?"

"Because, sir, it affords me the assurance that I shall not meet with it often."

Here is a beautiful, rich, and majestic plant: it is the poppy; how finely cut are its sea-green leaves, how straight and flexible is its stalk; the buds of its flowers incline languishingly towards the earth, but a day or two before they burst, they will raise themselves gradually, and present their beautiful, rich cup to the heavens; we may then say of them, with much more truth than of man, that the sign of its nobility is that it naturally looks towards heaven, which is not true as regards man. The dignity attributed to man by Ovid—

"Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus;"

—is in error, he would give up the sublime position instantly.

There is a bud which has risen; tear open its green envelope, and see how its splendid petals are enclosed in it, ragged and without order; you might say it was the carpet-bag of a careless student, setting out for the vacation. How can nature treat such fine, such rich stuff with so little care? Is there not a little affected disdain for the purple in this? I only know the flower of the pomegranate, which is also red, whose petals are as ragged-looking in their envelope as the petals of the poppy. But, make yourself easy; scarcely is the flower blown, when a mild, genial air smooths the petals of both the pomegranate and the poppy, and renders them as even as those of other flowers.

Different flowers have different manners of arranging themselves in their buds, in which they are compelled to occupy so small a space.* The petals of roses cover each other by a portion of their sides; the bindweed† is rolled and folded like

* The folding of floral leaves is technically termed their æstivation; that of foliage-leaves their vernation, since the former is most commonly seen in summer, the latter in spring.

† *Convolvulus.*

filter-papers. It is the same with leaves in the bud; those of the lilac are folded long-wise, half upon half; those of the aconite are doubled in their width, from bottom to top, several times over themselves; those of the gooseberry are folded like a fan; those of the apricot are rolled over each other.

It is a curious sight to see plants issuing from the earth at the commencement of the Spring; many long-lived plants seem to yield to winter and death, they give up their summer leaves to them, and bury themselves deeply in the earth.

But a soft rain and a mild air warns them that the beautiful festival of Spring is about to commence, and every plant must prepare itself to go upon the stage and play its part. Some are quite dead; but, before they died, they confided their seeds to the earth—little prolific eggs which the first rays of the sun of March hatch—and which are eager to burst forth; others have various processes for piercing the earth, hardened over them by cold, drought, and wind; such as have firm and sharp leaves, like those of the hyacinth, the gladiolus, and the narcissus, unite them into close points, and make themselves a passage easily; the narcissus and the gladiolus place two of them one over the other, and come out in a flattened blade; the hyacinths enclose their flower, already formed, in three sharp leaves, hollowed in grooves, whose union only forms a single point; others, like the peony, envelope their first buds in a sheath, which falls as soon as they get above ground.

But what will the anemones do, whose large leaves are deeply cut, and without consistency? They make the tail of each leaf ascend, bent in two in the middle; it is a rounded elbow, which undertakes to break through the earth, and comes out like the half of a ring; then, whilst one of the sides is retained by the root, the other, to which the folded leaf holds, is drawn up without being rubbed the least in the world; once out, it develops itself, and expands.

But let us return to our poppy. There are red ones of all shades, white, some streaked white and red, and violet coloured; there are no yellow ones, nor blue ones, nor green ones; I don't even know any that are streaked with white and violet. Notwithstanding the numerous varieties of flowers

which are believed to be discovered every day, each has its fixed and impassable limits; during the last twenty years, forty leagues, perhaps, have been sown with the seeds of dahlias, without one blue one ever being produced, although violet ones are common enough. I will not venture to say what has been done to procure a blue rose. The rose has the advantage of the poppy, there being many beautiful yellow roses.

One poppy stem produces more than thirty thousand seeds; they are always contained in the red, the white, and the violet. Many gardeners talk of green roses, produced by grafting the rose upon the holly; and of black roses made by grafting upon the black currant: these are nothing but absurd tales; there are no black flowers, and very few green ones, particularly of a bright green: I know scarcely any of them that are really pretty, except the spurge-laurel,* which grows in the woods, and bears charming green sweet-scented flowers, the centre of which is occupied by stamens of a fine orange-yellow; it blossoms in the month of February; the berries of it, when ripe, are a deep purplish-black.

Now, here is a delightful journey I am taking, my friend, without changing my place. When you are in a boat, it seems that the boat is motionless, and that the two banks fly on each side of you, unrolling, as it were, a panorama of their shores, their poplars, their willows, and the various flowers and the houses which border them; this is a thing that has been remarked a hundred times; but people are so determined to see only that which they have read, that I have never seen it set down anywhere that if the banks of the river appear to pass in a contrary direction to that of the boat, this illusion only extends to a certain distance, and that if there are, nearer to the horizon, other trees and other buildings, the latter seem, on the contrary, to take the direction of the boat, and that these two lines of trees and houses cross with a simultaneous passage in opposite directions.

It appears to me that I am the sport of an illusion similar to that which we experience in a boat, when I see the flowers appear, each in its turn, around me; I almost fancy I am travelling; it would appear, in fact, that I changed my place as often as I see the decorations, the actors, and the scene

* *Daphne Laureola.*

change, however small or confined it may please me to choose it to be. There is not an actor that appears before his turn; they seem every one to issue from the earth, or their envelope, at a signal, or as an answer given to the signal,—Sit down and travel.

The sharp wind of the winter has swept away the leaves; the despoiled trunks and branches of the trees present various colours: the wood of the cornel-tree* is of a brilliant red; that of the golden ash is yellow; the branches of the Spanish broom are of emerald-green; the trunk of the birch is white; the branches which have shot from the linden-tree during the summer are of violet-red; there is a raspberry, which the gardeners call blue-wood, and which is of a splendid violet; some maples have their branches green; the American walnut is black. But the mosses vegetate and flourish, and at the foot of a tree, the Christmas rose, the black hellebore,† opens its flowers, like simple roses, white or pale rose colour; the sweet-smelling coltsfoot, the winter heliotrope,‡ displays from the bosom of its large round foliage its grey and rose-coloured tufts which shed around a sweet vanilla odour.

But December is gone; these two actors disappear at the first signal given by the frost; here is January, covering the earth with snow; the frost splits the trees; it is a new scene: the redbreast comes nearer to our dwelling; the calycanthus§ of Japan opens, upon such of its naked branches as are seen through the snow, little pale flowers, yellow and violet, which exhale a sweet perfume, recalling at once the odour of the jasmine and that of the hyacinth. This is a long monologue; it is the only flower that blows in the open air during severe cold: the flowers soon wither and fall—its grey branches remain naked—the leaves will not show themselves before spring.

What is going to appear with the month of February? The nut-trees suspend their long yellow catkins, and expand their little carmine tips; the daphne-laurel, of which I spoke to you but now, is soon followed by another daphne,‖ which is called in France *bois gentil*, and which bears flowers like its own, but which are lilac, rose-coloured, or white; the hepatica opens its little double, rose-coloured, or deep blue roses; this is a sort of first act, an exposition in which the

* *Cornus sanguinea.* † *Helleborus niger.* ‡ *Petasites fragrans.*
§ *Calycanthus floridus.* ‖ *Daphne Mezereon.*

personages present themselves almost one by one, or at most, two by two.

But in March, the fruit-trees begin to display their rich clothing; the almond is covered with flowers of a rosy-white, the apricot with white blossoms, the peach with rose-coloured: near the water, the crowfoot opens its golden tufts; primroses blossom on the banks, and yellow gillyflowers * on the walls; crocuses spring up in the grass, among the white stars of the early daisy, like little lilies, with their yellow corollas, violet, or striped with violet and white; some few violets peep forth from under the dead leaves which fell from the trees in the autumn: then all this disappears as if by the waving of a wand.

The bluebell † opens its violet blue spikes of blossoms, and all the flowers that have preceded it recognise the signal and disappear; their part is played—they will come on again next year for a fresh representation.

Look at them well, admire their various forms, their fresh or brilliant colours, inhale their various perfumes, you will, perhaps, never see them again; if fortunate, you have, at most, twenty or thirty similar representations to behold.

But you see them depart without regret—they are replaced by so many others. In fact, flowers will soon be so numerous it will be impossible to count them; everything blossoms, or seems to blossom—trees, herbs, butterflies; but each has its day, each has its hour—none come before, none exceed the prescribed moment.

Spring and summer pass away—the crowd gets thinner: the *queen Marguerites*, the true flower of autumn, are replaced by the *dahlias*, the dahlias by the *asters*, and the asters themselves fade away at the appearance of the *Indian chrysanthemums*. There is a variety of chrysanthemums with small yellow flowers, which appears the last of all, and closes the gay procession.

And with every leaf, with every flower, are born and die the insects which inhabit them, and feed upon them, and likewise those which eat these insects themselves: the flowers sow their seeds, which are their eggs; the insects lay their eggs, which are their seeds; after which the hellebores and the coltsfoot re-bloom, and hatch the insects which belong to

* *Cheiranthus Cheiri.* † *Scilla nutans.*

these plants. A flower which is born and dies, is a world with its inhabitants.

But if you are not willing to wait all the year, or if your memory serves you badly, remain there only one day, and see how everything passes before you; see how everything travels to show you new objects.

My letter is long. To-morrow I will only make the journey of the day, as I have just made that of the year.

Chrysopa reticulata, with eggs. See pp. 32, 33.

LETTER IX.

AWAKENING OF CREATION—THE LUPIN—NIGHT—THE SLEEP OF CREATION—THE GLOWWORM—THE DEATH'S-HEAD MOTH—RESPIRATION OF PLANTS.

THE sun is not yet above the horizon, but the shadows of night begin to disperse;

"Night folds her robes about her, and departs."

How many fatiguing and unwholesome pleasures we purchase at their weight in gold, when we have it in our power to enjoy the most solemn and magnificent spectacle—the creation of the world! for nothing.

Night had deprived every object of form and colour; day restores them all.

In the garden, the yellow and white flowers are the first to receive their colouring. Such as are rose-coloured, red, and blue, are still invisible, and exist not for the eye; the foliage

begins to show its form; but it is black. The rose-colours begin to appear, then the red, lastly the blue,—all the forms are distinct. Already the hemerocallis, a sort of yellow lily, closed during the night, re-opens its corolla, and begins to spread around a sweet jonquil odour. The dandelion, with its golden flower, had spread forth its numberless rays in the grass, even before the hemerocallis; whilst the Easter-daisies, still shut up, keep their little silver spikes gathered together in close sheaves, of which they only expose the under part, which is of a beautiful rose-colour.

The birds awaken, and begin their morning song. The heavens assume a rosy tint; the grey clouds become of a clear lilac; the east expands into a luminous yellow; the cherry-trees planted in the west receive upon their grey bark a rosy tint, from the first ray which the sun launches obliquely at them. There is the star of day! the star of life, ascending in all his glory and majesty—a vast globe of fire mounting from the horizon.

All the plants now awake,—the acacia, with its leaves folded and placed one over the other. See, they separate, and exhibit their graceful forms. The blue lupin, which has leaves of a dusky green, shaped like hands, had closed its fingers, and let its arms fall against its stalk;—now the leaves spread, and rise to their proper position.

The lupin has caused many pages to be written by the learned. Virgil has somewhere said, *tristis lupinus.* Why did Virgil call the lupin *sad?* The kind of which we are speaking is of a charming appearance; the flower is of an agreeable shape, and a beautiful colour; other kinds afford a sweet perfume. Why did Virgil say that the lupin was sad? A vast number of reasons have been assigned by the learned for it; many volumes have been perpetrated, as well by learned botanists as by learned commentators upon this subject, and yet they have never agreed.

I remember a question which puzzled us at college, and remains as undecided as that of the *tristis lupinus.*

"Why," asked one scholar of another—"why is the salmon the most hypocritical of fishes?" His companion reflected for some time, but as he was not a *savant* by profession, he said, "I don't know." A savant never says, "*I don't know;*"

he prefers error to ignorance. "I don't know," said the scholar, looking at the other for the solving word of the enigma. "No more do I," replied the other; "if I had known, I should not have asked you." The only reason, however, for Virgil's calling the lupin sad was, that he stood in need, for the measure of his verse, of two long syllables, which the word tristis supplied him with. This is not an uncommon thing with the Latin poets, whom I love to a reasonable extent, but whom I do not choose to raise to the clouds, in order to give a rational colouring to any degree of envy or malice that I may have towards my contemporaries.

But let us continue to watch the awakening of the plants. The balsam, which had drooped its leaves towards the earth, now again raises them towards the heavens. The primrose, which, on the contrary, had raised its leaves, and embraced its stalk with them, spreads them abroad, and allows them to hang down a little.

The insects begin to buzz; the *souci-pluvial* opens its flower, which is a violet disc surrounded by rays, white at top, and pale violet underneath; the white water-lily, which yesterday evening closed its flowers, blooms afresh; whilst the convolvulus,* which climbs in garlands, loaded with flowers, rose, violet, white, and striped, closes its flowers, which have been open during the night. The day-lilies, in their turn, expand their blue and yellow flowers. Each plant blows at the hour that has been appointed for it: the sun, which forces one to expand, obliges another to close; and yet to the eye, there is no difference in them.

Insects, butterflies, and flies of all kinds and colours, are busy everywhere.

But the dandelion closes its petals about three o'clock in the afternoon; the *souci-pluvial* is not long in following its example, unless the weather be rainy, for then it would have closed much sooner. The daisy, which had spread its little bosom out to the sun, gathers itself together, and becomes pink. Gradually the leaves of the acacia are folded, as are those of the other trees, whose waking we this morning witnessed; the day-lily † closes; the sun is about to set; the white blossom of the water-lily gathers its petals together,

* *Calystegia.* † *Hemerocallis.*

and shuts up closely. The birds have ceased to sing, and quarrel for the snuggest places under the leaves; you may see the colours you admired in the morning reappear in the heavens; but they have assumed severer and deeper shades. The rose-colour of the morning is red in the evening; the yellow is orange, the lilac has become violet; the globe of fire descends, and disappears in a red fog, which looks like the lighted ashes of a volcano. The trees in the east, in their turn, receive the adieu and last look of the sun, as the trees in the west received his "good morning," and his earliest ray. The beetle kind fly heavily about; the horned and rhinoceros beetles issue from the hollows of the oaks, the blue and white stercoraires, more richly clothed than kings, rise from the cow-dung.

It is night.

But the night has its birds, its flowers, and its insects, which sleep during the day, and which awake while the others sleep.

The moon is their sun.

The nightshade has opened its little purple, yellow, or white horns. One variety, whose white flower is supported by a long tube, has a centre of a rich violet, and exhales a sweet odour. The evening primrose* expands its beautiful perfumed yellow cups. The convolvulus will wait till the middle of the night.

The stars glitter forth in the heavens. In the grass the female glowworms† begin to shine with a green, phosphoric light; it is only the lower extremity of their body, and the under part, which is so luminous. The glowworm is, in the day time, a flat insect, dragging itself along upon six feeble feet.

THE GLOWWORM.

You know the history of Hero and Leander: they were two lovers, separated by a branch of the sea. Every night Leander

* *Œnothera biennis.* † *Lampyris noctiluca.*—ED.

swam across this strait, to go and pass a few minutes with Hero. I don't know whether Hero was very beautiful, but with the first comer and a few obstacles, a passion is easily kindled. Ovid says she was "beautiful exceedingly," and I will take Ovid's word. One night a tempest arose, whilst Leander, guided by the torch which his lover lighted every evening, was endeavouring in vain to gain the opposite shore. The poet puts a very touching prayer into his mouth: he implores the tempest not to drown him till his return; the tempest was deaf, and the unhappy Hero beheld the body of her lover cast by the waves at her feet.

The glowworm only fires her torch, and takes so much pains to show it, because it may serve as a guide to a crowd of little vagabond Leanders, to whom nature has granted wings. The males of the glowworms are much smaller than the females, and, I should think, much more numerous, for there are seldom less than three or four around one female. They are not luminous.*

While, following the example of Diogenes, but from another motive, the glowworm bears her lantern, a large moth† passes close to me, its wings making a noise almost as loud as those of a small bird; in fact, it is much larger than some humming-birds. It passes by the sleeping flowers, it is in search of something; it knows that in those beautiful garnet and topaz cups of the nightshade and œnotheras, a sweet nectar is prepared for it. There it is over an œnothera; it hovers over without touching the flower, its wings appear motionless, so quickly does it move them. Then it unrolls a trunk coiled beneath its head, which escaped my sight, but which is longer than the whole insect; that trunk separates in two; each of the two is a perfect trunk, by

HUMMING-BIRD MOTH.

* The author is not quite correct here. The male glowworm does give out some light, but it is very faint.—Ed.

† *Sphinx ligustri.*—Ed.

means of which it sucks from the depths of the flowers the honey they contain.

We must not believe that because it only flies by night, this butterfly, which naturalists call a sphinx, neglects its dress. Its wings are of a grey, shaded with various browns and blacks; its body is painted with white, rose-coloured, and black rings, separated along its whole length by a grey stripe.

Here comes another, still more richly clothed; its body and its wings are of two colours—rose, and olive-green.

But what plaintive cry do I hear upon that jasmine? Is it that great sphinx * which has lighted there, and takes it

DEATH'S-HEAD MOTH.

into his head to moan thus? If the cry it utters is lamentable, its aspect is not a bit more exhilarating. Its upper wings are shaded with dark colours, the inferior are of pale tarnished orange, with black bands. Its body is striped with black rings, and with that same dull orange; but it is on its corselet that nature has indulged in a singular fancy; orange and black spots form, in a perfectly distinct manner, the figure of a death's head.

* *Acherontia atropos.*—ED.

In 1730 there appeared in Brittany a great number of these moths; their cry and their singular appearance spread terror in every mind. Curés spoke of them in the pulpit, and pronounced their appearance an evident sign of the anger of heaven. Imaginations were affected in the highest degree; many persons made public confession; one curé wrote a homily upon this subject, which was inserted in "Le Mercure de France." The most incredulous said that this prodigy announced a pestilence. M. de Pontchartrain, then Secretary of the Marine, demanded of the Academy if any of these alarms were well founded. The Academy, having answered negatively, was strongly blamed by the Church; the fathers of Trevoux proclaimed in their journal, that it was very wrong to disabuse the people concerning a salutary terror. "The public," said they, "has always reason to be alarmed, because it is always guilty, and everything which can remind it of the anger of an avenging God, is always to be respected."

The kind of cry which emanates from this sphinx, so justly named *Atropos*, is produced by the rubbing of its trunk against the partitions which inclose it. It has been a large yellow and green caterpillar.

The convolvulus does not expand its flowers till the night is pretty far advanced. There is a little ugly enough caterpillar, which lives upon the convolvulus, and which becomes a very pretty and singular moth;* the caterpillar is of a whitish green, rather velvety. The moth is of a dazzling whiteness: its wings appear as if made of ten little feathers of extreme fineness. Each of the upper wings is divided into two; each of the inferior wings is divided into three cut parts in such a manner, that it is only with the aid of a microscope we can discover they are not real feathers, much more white than those of the swan, much more delicately fringed than those of the ostrich.

Night is the time in which trees breathe the oxygen which is as necessary for their existence as it is for ours. In the day time they will expire and return to the air much more

* *Pterophorus pentadactylus.*—Ed.

of it than they have taken; the action of the sun decomposing the carbonic acid gas.

These two phenomena explain the danger there is in keeping vegetables during the night in a close chamber, for then the vegetables absorb a part of the oxygen, and diminish the quantity of respirable air. This quantity, necessary for every man, is more considerable than is generally imagined. A man consumes per hour at least six cubic *metres* of air. Most of our pleasures taken in common,—as balls, soirées, theatres, assemblies,—begin by considerably diminishing this indispensable ration. It is difficult in a rout or soirée, as they are now-a-days given, for each person to have for his part more than a *metre* and a half of respirable air. You would not easily determine to enjoy any of these pleasures if you were obliged to buy them at the price of the privation of two-thirds of your *food*. The privation of *air* produces effects less immediate; but it is probable that it engenders great part of the diseases peculiar to the inhabitants of cities.

Besides that, vegetables shut up in a chamber absorb a part of the oxygen, they exhale an equal portion of carbonic acid gas, which is a mortal poison when mixed in too strong a proportion with the air we breathe, and of which it is nevertheless one of the elements. This equally explains the pleasure we experience in the day time under trees. a happiness which is not to be attributed merely to the freshness and shade.

You see, my friend, that without its being necessary to change our place, it is sufficient to look around us to see new and surprising things pass, without ceasing, before our eyes. Not one of the plants, not one of the insects, of which I have spoken to you in this and the preceding letters, blossoms, shows itself, shuts up, is transformed, or dies, either before or after the epoch, the day, the hour assigned it.

The dandelion always open its rays of gold before the daisy displays its rays of silver; the œnothéra never develops its corolla before the water-lily has folded up its petals. The blackbird whistles in the morning; the nightingale sings

through the night; the grasshopper, in the grass, chirps hoarsely during the burning heat of the sun, a kind of croaking like that of frogs in a marsh, when the sun is sinking. Every moment has its interest, its spectacle, its riches, its splendour!

THE FROG.

LETTER X.

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?—RECOLLECTIONS AND REGRETS—UNIVERSALITY OF DEATH —WHO ARE MAD, AND WHO SANE.

WHEN I endeavour to remember all the happinesses of my life, I find there is scarcely one I had anticipated that I secured in the end.

Happinesses are like game: when we aim at them too far off, we miss them.

Most of those which recur to my memory have come unexpectedly. For many people, happiness is a gross, imaginary and compact thing, which they wish to find all in a piece; it is a diamond as large as a house, which they pass their lives in seeking and pursuing at all hazards.

They are like a horticulturist of my acquaintance, who dreams of nothing but meeting with a *blue* rose, a rose which I have sought after a little myself, and which it is more unreasonable to hope for than the diamond of which I spoke

to you just now. Since this fancy seized the poor man's brains, other flowers have had neither splendour nor perfume for him.

Happiness is *not* a blue rose,—it is the grass of the meadows, the bindweed of the fields, the wild rose of the hedges, a word, a song, a no matter what.

It is *not* a diamond as large as the house: it is a mosaic of little stones, each one of which often has no separate value of itself.

This large diamond, this blue rose, this great happiness, this monolith, is a dream. Every happiness I can recal, I neither pursued long, nor sought for; they have shot up and blossomed under my feet like the daisies on my grassplot.

I have ever found my greatest happiness in a garden over which I could have jumped—in a chamber in which I could not take three paces. That chamber, I remember it still; I have but to shut my eyes to see it; it appears to me that I see it in my heart. It was furnished with chairs covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, with a table near the chimney, and an old piano between the two windows. One day *she* endeavoured to teach me to play with one finger, an air which she sometimes sang, and which I passionately admired. Her father was seated in the chimney-corner reading his newspaper. First, she played the air for me, then she bade me try. I could not get over more than the first three notes; she played it more slowly—but I succeeded no better. She laughed at my want of skill. Then she took my hand to make me strike the notes with my finger: it was the first time our hands had met. I trembled: she ceased to laugh, and withdrew her hand, and we remained both silent. The day was closing, and mixed a profound meditation with our emotions. Our looks met: it appeared to me that I became her, and that she became me; that our blood mingled in our veins—our thoughts in our souls. Two large tears fell from her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks as two shining pearls of dew in the sweet morning on a rose. Then her father, whom, with all the rest of the world, we had forgotten, let the paper fall which he could no longer see to read, and told his daughter to light the lamp. "And you cannot see any more than I can," he added, "for it is some time since I heard the piano."

Well! to obtain this happiness—and I remember no other so great in my life—I had but to descend a flight of about fourteen steps, and come from my own chamber into that of the yellow chairs. And my chamber, so small, so poorly furnished, what joys it has contained! It was there that I made for her ten thousand verses, not one of which she ever saw; it was there I wrote to her so many letters; it was there that I re-read so many times the few letters she ever wrote me, that the Alexandrian library itself could not have supplied me with more reading.

And that staircase—those fourteen steps which separated us—how many times have I descended it and ascended it to meet her, to meet her father or their servant, to see her door, to see the bell she had touched, the rush mat upon which she had placed her feet! and all in the hope that she would recognise my step, that she would hear me ascend and descend, that she might say, "There he is!"

I travelled three hundred leagues on that staircase, my friend, and at each step met with a happiness, or, at least, an emotion.

How beautiful were the flowers of the spring of our life, and how they have faded! how many things are dead within us, for which we never dream of wearing mourning! so far from that, we mistake our mutilations for useful retrenchments, we take pride from our losses, we call our infirmities virtues; the stomach no longer digests properly, and we call ourselves sober; our blood is chilled, and we say we have left off loving, when, actually, love has left us; our hair, our teeth die, and yet we seldom think that we must soon die altogether. We worry, we torment ourselves for a future which everything tells us we shall never see. I knew a man of eighty years of age, who frequently said—"Well, I really must set about thinking of my future!"

And yet we are not without warnings; everything speaks of death.

This house we live in was built for a man long since dead, by masons who are likewise dead. These trees, under whose shade we indulge in our reveries, were planted by gardeners who are dead. The painters who created the pictures on our walls are dead. Our clothes, our shoes, are made from

the wool and the hides of dead animals. The boat in which we glide between the river's green banks—why, it was a dead tree that supplied the planks for it. This fire before which we chat, is fed by the members of carcases of trees. Your joyous festivals, your every day repasts, present to your eyes and your appetites portions of dead animals. This wine, of which you boast the age, reminds you that he who gathered the vintage, he who made the corks, that he who bottled it, and all who were then living, are dead. And in the evening, when you go to the theatre to see *Cinna* or *Mithridates* represented, those personages you look upon, are they not the shades of the dead whom you evoke that they may come and gambol before you and amuse you?

When these thoughts come over me, I am seized with a profound horror for all trouble, anxiety, and agitation; I only think of living quietly, without a care for the present or the future, and I wonder at the extravagance of all those men who, having but two hours to sleep, pass those two hours in making and turning over their bed. It appears to me that I then see all these people who are elbowing each other, in order to attain I don't know what, to be furious madmen; and I became of the opinion of that philosopher, who pretended to have discovered the true reason for there being, in all great cities, a lunatic asylum: it is, that by shutting up some poor creatures under the name of madmen, strangers might believe that all who are out of that hospital are sane.

LETTER XI.

UPON MY BACK.

I AM, at this moment, stretched upon a grassy bank sprinkled with violets, beneath a great oak which shelters me from the sun; I cannot imagine any change sufficiently agreeable to induce me to quit this position. I am upon my back, more than half buried in grass; my two arms, crossed behind my head, elevate it a little; the thick foliage of the oak forms a green transparent tent over me; between certain branches I catch blue patches of the heavens, I hear a thousand noises in the air, a chaffinch twitters at the summit of the tree, bees buzz around me, some soft puffs of a cooling wind just stir the trees; I listen, and I look around me. Across the blue heavens pass long flocks of silk, whiter than anything we are acquainted with, and which float languidly in the air, sinking and rising; this is what the country people call *the Virgin's thread;* saying that they are threads escaped from the distaff

of the Virgin Mary. I love not to have such associations destroyed, and it was by no means a pleasurable discovery to me, when I one day ascertained that these threads were produced by a species of spider.* A grain of groundsel surmounted by a little downy parachute, sails over me through the air, to go and sow itself at a distance; a seed of the wall-flower, flat and light, is carried by the wind to the top of an old wall, or into the fissures of the tower of the church, to decorate them with its golden stars. There is a bee just gone by, with its feet laden with the yellow dust it has collected from the stamens of flowers; and the wind blows the yellow dust about in all directions.

I have seen flowers which contain in their corollas both the husband and wife; I have seen others which bear them separated, but upon the same plant; there are, however, trees and flowers which only produce separately, males or females, and these are frequently planted by chance at a great distance from each other; there would be no loves, no marriages, no reproduction, but the air takes upon it the charge of bearing the caresses of the husband to his spouse, in the form of those little yellow bags, which contain a fructifying powder. Bees and other insects which fly from flower to flower, are little messengers who carry perfumed kisses from the bride-groom to the bride; it is thus they repay the hospitality they receive in the rich corollas and nectaries filled with delicious honey, and thus the wife receives in her bosom the message of her absent husband.

The facility which nature has accorded to plants to correspond thus intimately through the track of the air, and by the means of insects, bears with it consequences of which certainly we ought not to complain; but which, nevertheless, in a human point of view, must appear as a means of diseases. I will show you in what its consequences consist. There is a white pink, which, if left to the regular course of nature, would only bear white pinks; but frequently, by the intervention of bees or other insects, the white pinks become red, or white spotted with red. It is to such errors, if errors they can be called, which produce such beautiful effects, that we owe the numerous varieties of flowers with which our gardens are ornamented.

* The gossamer-spiders belong to the genera *Epeira* and *Thomisus*.

This, besides, has not the same inconveniences as among men; in the first place, love among flowers is not selfish; they are happy in loving and blooming, and are perfectly unacquainted with jealousy, that degrading feeling composed of avarice, pride, and angry love. It is not likewise as in the poor human families called rich, in which one child, who happens to come first or be a favourite, is a disinheritor of the others; the riches which flowers leave to their children are immense and eternal; they consist of the earth, the sun, the air, the shower and the dew; there is nothing to dread, there will always be plenty for every one.

Here passes in its turn an ichneumon, similar in form to that which I saw depositing its eggs in the body of a caterpillar; only this is much larger. It also will deposit its eggs in the body of another insect. This insect is a worm destined to become a tolerably large beetle. This beetle knows that its little ones have enemies; therefore, it is in a place which appears inaccessible that it takes care to conceal its eggs. It deposits them under the bark of trees. Alas! useless precaution, fruitless cares! There is the ichneumon, prowling around the oak beneath which I recline; it alights and searches the trunk of the tree; it stops. The wimble which it bears at the extremity of its body divides into three parts, of which two form the sheath of the third; it plunges its naked weapon, finer than a hair, into the bark. The task is long and wearisome, but it finishes by succeeding. It remains motionless for some seconds, and slowly withdraws its saw. If I pleased, I could lay hold of it with my fingers; it is a fortunate thing that no bird surprises it whilst thus engaged. But the wimble is withdrawn and returned to its case. The ichneumon flies away. By an unknown art, by a wonderful instinct, it has been able, through the thick bark of the oak, to ascertain the spot where the beetle had concealed its egg, which is become a worm; and the ichneumon, in its turn, has deposited its egg in the body of this worm, which will serve it for pasture.

Butterflies of all colours pass before my eyes, sporting about in the air. I see the Red Admiral,* which is black, and bears upon its wings bands or stripes of a fiery red. When

* *Vanessa atalanta.*—Ed.

it was a caterpillar, it was brown, marked with a line of yellow spots on each side, and covered with hairs. It lived then upon the nettle, and delighted in leaves which it no longer cares about, but which it will take care to return to when the time shall come for it to lay its eggs, in order that the little caterpillars which issue from them may find at their birth a home and food that will suit them.

How is it possible to paint all that I see passing before me, all that moves in the air, and also all that I cannot see? Through a little space between the leaves of the oak, the sun darts a white, brilliant ray, and myriads of little flying creatures sport in that ray. They are so small that they are no longer visible if a cloud for a moment obscures the sun and extinguishes its beam.

Myriads of animals have been discovered in a drop of water, by means of the microscope, because a drop of water can be kept steady under the glass of the lens. If we were able, in a similar manner, to isolate a drop of air, it is more than probable we should perceive thousands of insects which escape our sight. There are ichneumons,—we have seen them,—which lay their egg in the egg of a butterfly. Who can venture to say that the egg of the ichneumon is not pierced in its turn by another insect which we do not see?

We should have been wrong, before the invention of the microscope, in denying the existence of all the otherwise imperceptible insects which have been revealed by its means. I would not dare to assert that there are not other tribes which the microscope even cannot show us. Who knows if those maladies which regularly prevail in certain seasons, or which affect us irregularly at distant periods, as plagues and epidemics, are not caused by insects which we respire in the air?

We find it related in an old collection of Jewish traditions, that Titus boasted of having conquered the God of the Jews, at Jerusalem. Then a terrible voice was heard, which said: "Wretched man, the smallest of my creatures shall triumph over thee." A fly or gnat glided into the nostril of the emperor, and penetrated to his brain. There, during seven years, it fed upon the brain; no art, no medicine could dislodge it. After horrible sufferings Titus died. His head was

opened to ascertain what the disease could be which had baffled the efforts of all his physicians, and the insect was found, but amazingly enlarged.

Whilst allowing my eyes to wander amidst the leaves of the oak, I perceive singular fruits and very strange flowers. There are little green apples marked with a rosy tinge on one side, like the red-streak apple. There are upon other leaves little red berries. These fruits have an insect for kernel, the seed of these flowers are the eggs of insects. They are dwellings produced upon the leaves by the puncture of little flies which lay their eggs in the interior of the leaf. This puncture produces the same effects upon the leaf as the sting of certain insects produces upon us; the leaf becomes inflamed, swells in a round form, and produces a ball, in which the little worm which comes from the egg, and which is to become a fly, grows and feeds up to the moment of its transformation. Other flies also sometimes come to lay in the interior of these *galls*, as these excrescences are called, after they are formed, although their offspring do not feed upon the leaves of the oak. So far from that, they will become carnivorous flies; and it is the first inhabitant, the one for whom the retreat was created, which will serve them for food. After having eaten it, they inherit the house, are then transformed into real flies, as the proprietor would have been, pierce the gall, and go to seek females who, like themselves, have been laid in other galls, have eaten the inhabitants of them, and seek a male in the plains of air.

Almost all plants give birth to different galls, in which various insects grow, and are transformed, eat or are eaten. Upon the leaves of the viburnum arise galls, from which issues a little beetle of a cinnamon colour. The red-tinted galls of the leaves of the willow contain a sort of caterpillar, which escapes from them at a certain moment, because it is not in the gall that it is to be transformed; it will bury itself in the earth, until it issues from its shell in the form of a four-winged fly. The wild rose has sometimes a gall covered with a sort of reddish-green hair, of a very singular appearance. If we keep some of these galls shut up, we shall see flies of three or four different species issue from them. We must not, however, believe that they have rights, if equal,

at least not similar ones to the proprietorship of this domicile. Some occupy the gall by right of birth; it was their mother who formed it by a puncture, and who deposited the egg in it, from which proceeds the worm which they have been before they were flies. These are little big-bellied, hump-backed flies; the male is quite black, the female has a black corslet, and a chestnut-coloured abdomen. These are the legitimate possessors; the others to a quasi birthright, add the right of conquest. This is the manner in which the thing falls out: two roundish eggs are deposited in the hairy gall of the rose-tree; a black and chestnut fly, the cynips of the rose, has in the first place laid its egg, and by its puncture causes the gall to grow; an ichneumon has laid the second; these two eggs remain for some time together, are hatched, and become two worms. The first eats the interior of the gall, which grows and enlarges in proportion; the second sucks the first, which is renewed as fast as the other eats it, like Prometheus under the vulture, which consumed his liver, "*immortale jecur.*" In fact, a carnivorous worm would soon die with hunger if he took it into his head to devour the worm which is shut up with him at once. A man would not live long if he had only one sheep to eat.

But there is the sun declining; day departs. Absorbed in a sweet reverie, which is increased by the sound of the church clock, announcing the evening hour, I had forgotten to look at objects, or looked vacantly. The first stars appear through the foliage; what are these stars? The most learned astronomers tell us at what distance the planets are from our earth; they know which move, and what route they pursue; but that is the boundary of their science. Suppose we should be told, England is situated under such a degree of latitude, it is an island, we believe we can distinguish the mountains of it. We should not believe we were very well acquainted with England; but that, nevertheless, is the point to which our astronomical knowledge extends; and what labours, cares, inventions, watchings, calculations have been necessary in order to attain that.

These globes of fire, are they worlds like ours? Oh! then, my friend, what a joke is travelling! what does it signify to journey more or less miles in one of the globes, more nume-

rous, perhaps, than the sands of the sea, which gravitate round the sun? You will be very proud when you have made the tour of our world; and there are above us more worlds than you will in your voyages shake grains of sand from your feet, and all these worlds are unalterable by you; there are some of these worlds so distant, that each of them forms in our eyes nothing but an impalpable grain of luminous dust. There are probably some so distant from us that their light has not yet reached us since the creation of our world, although light travels four millions of leagues in a minute.

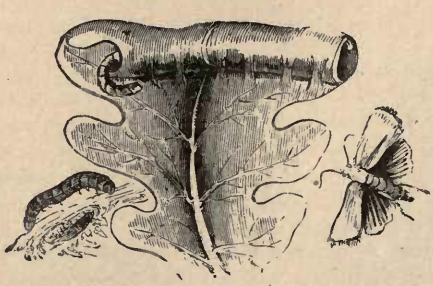
Now, these are what I call voyages and distances; what signify the two or three thousand leagues you will have travelled when you return? Truly, the advantage is not equal to the trouble and danger.

These worlds, are they destined to receive the souls of those who die? is death the commencement of immortality? at that awful moment do the wings of our soul develop themselves like the wings of the butterfly which issues from the winding-sheet it has spun for itself when a caterpillar?

The wind brings me, in soft breathings, delicious odours and distant sounds. From afar I can catch the notes of a horn, almost lost in the rustling of the trees; the air becomes fresh, I will go to *my* nest.

Have you, in the course of your day's journey, seen as many singular things as I have perceived, without changing my place, reclining on my back on the grass?

To-morrow I shall stretch myself on my face.



LETTER XII.

COLOURS.

THE learned, who have invented so many words, ought to have imagined some that might give us an exact idea of colours and their shades. I confess that this embarrasses me more than anything else in the account of my journey. There are but very few words to designate colours, and even they are taken at hazard from ideas that are very far removed from each other. This annoys me the more, because colours have for me harmonies as ravishing as those of music, because they awaken in my mind thoughts perfectly strict and individual, and their influence acts powerfully on my imagination.

I was once put in prison; well, the walls themselves were not half so disagreeable to me as a certain chocolate colour with which they were clothed; I recognised, to a certain point, the right which society has to put a man in prison, but I could not admit the right of surrounding him with this horrible colour.

One of the things most disagreeable to me in travelling, is the manner in which the chambers of inns are decorated: yellow curtains and red fringe, chairs with red covers and yellow fringe; these colours so generally and so barbarously

brought together by upholsterers, produce, with me, the most disagreeable impressions.

It often happens, even in houses in which I am not very much at home, that I rise in the midst of a conversation to go and separate two inimical colours, which some unlucky chance has brought into conjunction upon one piece of furniture. There are, for me, between colours and their shades, discords as strong as those that can possibly exist between certain notes of music.

There are no false colours except in the nomenclature of our *marchandes des modes;* but there are assemblages of colours as false as the notes of any one who had never had a bow in his hand, but took up a violin and scraped away at random. I remember two persons who were always disagreeable to me on account of the colours they persisted in wearing: the first was a certain large woman, who always appeared in green dresses and yellow bonnets; the other, a man who decked himself out in staring red waistcoats and bright blue cravats. I endeavoured to contend against the prejudices inspired by such disfigurements; I have reason to repent of them: I have since had much to complain of in my relations with these two persons.

There are at least as many people with a false sight as with a false ear, without speaking of painters, some of whom see yellow, and others blue or grey, as if they looked at objects through spectacles of these colours.

It is remarkable that country people seem to acknowledge no colour but red, the domain of which, for them, embraces rose-colour and orange, and all the shades comprised within these two colours:—yellow, but only certain shades; when it is pale, they call it white; when deeper, it is red;—blue, which begins at amaranth and embraces all the shades of violet, except pure blue, which they sometimes confound with green. They know green pretty well; white is applied to all pale shades, black to all deep shades.

Being one day on the sea-shore, I walked over a track completely covered with little withered flowers, and so close together, that I thought, if viewed from a distance at the time of their blowing, the entire hill must have appeared of their colour. Well, not a soul in the country could tell me

what was the colour of this flower; I was not able to procure two answers sufficiently alike to give me a definite notion of them. Country people in general trouble themselves but little with the poetical side of nature: idylls and eclogues are falsehoods. I only remember two appreciations which I heard made in the same day by two peasants: one concerned a young elm which, planted among older elms, had hastened to attain their height, in order to enjoy its share of the air and the sun. It had a stem straighter and more tapering than that of a poplar; it waved its green luxuriant head at the least wind. "What a misfortune it is," said one of my neighbours, "that you have not another tree like that!" "Why?" "Because they would make such a superb ladder."[1] As in the spring time I was looking at the blossoms of the peach-trees, which began to show their rosy tips, another said to me,—"You see the crop begins to promise."[2]

I once heard a gardener ask his master, who was one of my friends, permission to sleep for the future in the stable. "There is no possibility of sleeping in the chamber behind the greenhouse, Sir," said he in support of his request; "there are nightingales there, which do nothing but guggle and keep up a noise all night."

Whilst endeavouring to describe to you the colours of certain flowers or insects, I have remarked that I was likely to make myself better understood by employing, to designate these colours, certain names of precious stones. It is very singular that most people are better acquainted with the stones which inhabit the depths of the earth at a thousand leagues from them, or the pearls and corals which must be fetched from the bottom of the sea, than with the flies which fly against our windows, or with the flowers which spring up under our feet, which surround us on all sides, and are before our eyes from our earliest infancy; this is because vanity has attached a singular value to precious stones, and has neglected

(1) We doubt the accuracy of this remark, as a ladder is invariably made of a single tree, the holes for the steps being first bored through the entire substance, and the tree then sawn longitudinally.—Ed.

(2) Both these instances are excelled by the old English story of the poetical traveller pointing out to his friend the pretty lambs frolicking in a meadow. "Ay," rejoined the other, "only think of a quarter of one of them, with asparagus and mint sauce!"

to notice common riches which nature has spread with such profusion over the surface of the earth. Truly, there are some precious stones which are singularly agreeable to my sight, but there is not one whose colours may not be found upon some flower or some insect. Is not the chrysis a living jewel, composed of an emerald and a ruby? Do you know a sapphire of so pure a blue as the corn-bottle* of the fields, as brilliant as the sage called *Salvia patens*, as the *Delphinium vivace*, which flourish in our gardens? Seek then among stones for the scarlet of certain geraniums, and of the little red verbena, which eclipses the geranium itself. Are these emeralds endued with the transparency of the leaves of the oak under which I reclined yesterday, when the sun was above it? Is there a diamond which has the fire and the colours of drops of dew in the sun? Is not a garden a living jewel-case, full of jewels which fly, and others that blossom and spread around their perfume? But precious stones are dear, all the world cannot have them, and that is the reason all the world wishes for them. The matter, besides, is not to see or to have precious stones, the object is to show them. What I tell you is neither a paradox nor a jest. What do you admire in precious stones? Is it the colour? You have but to look around you; flowers and insects have more beautiful colours than they have. Is it their hardness? The sand of your garden is very hard, the iron balcony of your window is very hard, and yet you take no pride in them: it must be then the value, it must then be money!

Besides, all precious stones are so closely imitated in glass, that few persons can distinguish them. Many women exhibit their real jewels only occasionally, and habitually wear false diamonds mounted in the same manner, to avoid thefts and accidents. Truly, these latter have as much brilliancy, and render the women who wear them as attractive, otherwise, you may be assured that not one of them would resign herself to such a sacrifice. What then is the use of the others, the true ones, shut up in their case? They have them, others know that they have them, and are acquainted with their value—that is all.

But let us return to colours. Many colours have taken

* *Centaurea cyanus.*

their denomination from certain precious stones. Well, these denominations have no meaning, because the same stones vary singularly in their shades, and even in their colour. Ask a mineralogist. The ruby is of a brilliant red, or rather softened with violet, but there are rubies which are of an orange red, and rubies of a rose colour. The emerald possesses all the tones of green, from the palest to the darkest. There are likewise white emeralds and yellow emeralds. The topaz you think must be yellow, for want of a word to specify a colour, and of all possible yellows, from that nearly white to a deep orange; but there are white topazes, green-tinted topazes, and others almost blue. The garnet is of a kind of deep crimson; inquire again of the mineralogists, and they will tell you that there are also orange garnets, green garnets, and black garnets.

Now, if there were anything we ought to be perfectly acquainted with, it would be the plants and the flowers upon which we have trodden from our infancy. By their means, then, if men would only deign to look at them sometimes. we should have, for the purpose of designating colours, a complete gamut, which would be wanting in no tone or the fraction of a tone, and a language exact and well arranged, inasmuch as the words would have a fixed meaning, invariable and the same for all. Some names of colours have been borrowed from flowers; and everybody, when they pronounce them, knows perfectly what they mean: capucine, lilac, violet, amaranth, *bouton d'or* (buttercup), *feuille morte* (filemot). rose. The names of colours borrowed from fruits are equally intelligible,—orange, lemon, plum, apricot, apple-green; but there is a crowd of these whose denomination is absolutely worth nothing, because it is drawn from objects which we have seldom before our eyes, or which are conventional without any existing type, such as Prussian blue, Royal blue, French blue, &c. Naples yellow, Chrome yellow, Gold yellow. In addition to these words, which convey nothing fixed or clear to the mind, there are between the shades of yellow and blue which they designate, more than fifty intermediate shades which there are no means of expressing. It is very plain that blue signifies almost nothing, since an object may have, at least, fifty different manners of being blue. We

have bestowed upon each colour two demi-tones, as we have to each note of music; we say deep blue and clear blue, as we say A sharp, or B flat. I don't know whether musicians are satisfied with these divisions, but, to a certainty, colourists are not. There are thirty different clear blues, and as many deep blues. Besides, how can we hit upon the right note? What, in colours, is the *blue natural*, the true blue, *the natural blue?* It becomes clear, then, that colours can only be expressed by comparisons, and the most limited capacity can comprehend that these comparisons ought to be taken from objects which are most familiar to us, and which vary the least. Flowers present us with these two advantages, and, in addition, that of containing in the same order of things and ideas all colours and all possible shades.

Red strikes man more than any of the other colours; it is admired by children and savages. Some of its different shades have, consequently, been distinguished, and names given to them; there is no other colour for which ordinary language furnishes so many,—crimson, scarlet, carmine, purple, carnation, vermilion, and several others; but even these denominations convey a vague idea to the mind, and it is difficult to make three persons agree as to the precise meaning of them. Ask the learned what was the precise shade of the purple of the ancients.

There are numberless shades that have no names at all. Let us take for example the least common colour among flowers, blue, and let us begin our gamut. Certain hyacinths will first give you a white scarcely tinged with blue; the Parma violet is of an extremely pale lapis blue; then comes the blue geranium of the meadows, then the Chinese Wistaria, then the blossom of the flax; then come in order of shades the Forget-me-not, Borage, Bugloss, Sage, the Cornflower, the Nemophylla, the Anagallis Morelli, the Plumbago Carpentæ; the long-leaved Larkspur, with single flowers, and then with double ones, which is of a metallic blue; and at last, as the deepest shade of dark blue, almost black, the berries of the Laurustinus.

If these designations were in use, they would give immutable ideas of colours, by means of a language for which no word has to be imagined, or a barbarism created: at a

thousand leagues, at a thousand years' distance, we could speak of these colours with rigid precision, because every one would have his gamut-type before his eyes.

You have already borrowed from flowers the word *rose;* but you have no words to express the shades of the rose. Well, you may find them at once in the different varieties of roses: the hundred-leaved rose, the rose of the four seasons, the Bengal rose, are not of the same rose colour, and the blossom of the peach-tree and that of the hyacinth have each particular shades.

And white, now; how can you express the shades of white? Look out of the window, a good way off; there are four trees covered with white blossoms,—a cherry-tree, a plum-tree, an apricot, and an almond-tree: I declare to you, that far as I am from them—a distance at which their form is invisible and at which their colours alone can be perceived—I should never confound these four trees with others whose blossoms are white, although of a very different shade. Give me, in the same way, an exact tint of a rose-colour or white, and I will tell you to what flower it belongs; but to do so, it must not be a strange thing to meet with a man who has deigned to pay some attention to the magnificence with which the earth is covered.

Language is at least equally poor in its attempts to express scents; but there I am at a pause; I am not nearly so well *up* in sweet smells as in colours.

Now here, my friend, is a letter which must have been very *ennuyante*, for readers to whom nature has not given, with regard to colours, a susceptibility equal to mine

LETTER XIII.

ON MY FACE.

Climb mountains, my dear friend, cross torrents, descend precipices, be drawn by horses, asses, mules, reindeer, camels, or dogs, according to the country in which you are. Here am I, returned again to my oak, once more reclining on the grass, but this time with my face downwards, some few inches from the ground, and it appears to me not at all unlikely that I shall be as fortunate as you in our common ardour in search of that which is new.

After we have viewed small things closely and attentively, we gradually lose the feeling of their dimensions; this green moss appears to me to be trees, and the insects which wander over its velvet surface, assume in my eyes an importance equal to that of the deer and stags of a park. Moss is interesting in more than one respect; in addition to the charm of its wavy, changeable colour, it is one of Nature's important agents. The Great Worker who constructed our abode, has established things in it in such a manner, that everything

lives, dies, and renews itself; and it seems as if He has arranged everything so completely, as to require Him to take no further heed of it. The life and death of vegetables, like the life and death of men, are but transitions. Death is the nourisher of life. A thing does not perish that it may no longer exist, but that another may exist in its turn; and when a certain circle is completed, the last production of this circle dies in its turn to resuscitate the first. Look at a naked rock, it is at first covered with rounded yellow patches; these patches are already springing into vegetation.

Mould of all kinds, for which we entertain a great repugnance, presents to the eye armed with a microscope charming vegetations, little forests which abound in their peculiar animals.

Mushrooms, which are a species of mould, cover arid spots with their whimsical forms and various colours, which in some kinds are even brilliant. The orange is of a capucin colour; the false orange is of the same colour, spotted with white; the red agaric is carnation, the viscous agaric is orange; others present all the shades of purple and brown, or are marbled with various colours.

These first vegetables die, and with their remains leave upon the rock or upon the barren grit a small quantity of a sort of mould, very small, but just large enough to allow certain lichens, which scarcely require any aid, yet cannot do quite without, to shoot up and vegetate in their turn. The mould which you see upon bread, preserves, &c. bears at the extremity of the filaments, little heads which burst for the escape of a productive dust, by means of which they are reproduced. Upon a pot of preserves may be found a great number of species of these small vegetations, differing from each other in form and fructification.

There is a particular kind of mould which attacks the seed of wheat, which is simply a parasitical plant.

The lichens die in their turn, and augment with their remains the layer of vegetable earth, in order that, successively, other species of stronger lichens may extend and increase that layer of earth on dying. In this manner, plants, to which a multitude of names have been given, succeed each other, until that layer of earth acquires sufficient thickness

and condition to allow mosses to spring up and spread their velvety carpet.

Ancient medicine used and abused certain lichens greatly, particularly one, which was a lichen that grows upon the skulls of the dead, and which was called "usnée du crane humain," (*muscus è cranio humano*).

There is a book bearing date 1684, published at Paris, but written by Sir Kenelm Digby, an Englishman of the time of Elizabeth, entitled,—"Sovereign Remedies and Secret Experiments, by Sir Kenelm Digby, Chancellor of the Queen of England. With many other secrets and curious perfumes for the preservation of the beauty of Ladies." This book, among other curious things, contains secret remedies which were then, as they are now-a-days, heaps of secrets which death teaches the doctors. The true receipt for the making of the Orvietan is among them. I copy it.

The true composition of the Orvietan or Antidotary Composition, more excellent than the Theriaca.

Honey, one pound.
Syrup of lemon, four drachms.
Fine sugar, half-a-pound.
Theriacal water, 1 pound.
Roots of angelica, one ounce
Of coral, tormentil, scorsenia, rhaphane, white ditany and pyrethrum, each one ounce, except the tormentilla, of which there should only be half an ounce.

These roots are to be pounded and sifted: twenty-one others which follow, and of which I will spare you the names, are to be pounded, but not sifted. Ten kinds of seeds are then added, with one ounce of the first horn of a stag (from the right hand branch); 1 drachm of the heart of a stag, pounded; half an ounce of pounded pearls, a hare's heart dried in an oven; the heart and liver of two vipers; half an ounce of white coral, and of the scrapings of a human skull, only half an ounce.

I cannot forbear quoting two different remedies against epilepsy. The first is excellent, but still not better than most of those the book contains; it is announced without particular recommendation: the patient is only required to swallow as much of the dung of a peacock as will lie on a fifteen-sous piece, and he will be cured. Now here is a consideration which never presented itself to the minds of financiers, who have since that time expelled from the coinage and proscribed fifteen-sous pieces; and now there are no fifteen-sous pieces, how is it possible to ascertain how much of the peacock's dung ought to be swallowed? Happily, at page 89, another still superior receipt presents itself.

"Remedy for epilepsy or falling sickness, tried by M. Digby, which cured the son of a minister at Frankfort in Germany, in the year 1659:—Take of polypode of oak, well dried and reduced to a subtle powder—of the moss grown on a human skull of a person who has suffered a violent death—of the parings of human nails of the hands and the feet, of each two drachms; of the root of dried peony, half an ounce; and of true oak mistletoe, half an ounce. This last must be gathered in the decline of the moon," &c.

But let us return to our mosses: the moss perishes in its turn, after having allowed to escape from its little urns a fecundating dust, which it confides to the winds, and which will reproduce it at a distance. We easily recognise the males and females in the mosses, sometimes, and in certain species, united on the same stalk, and separated in other species; the male bears little buds, the female little urns, covered with an operculum or lid, which detaches itself when the seeds are ripe, to allow them to fly away without obstacle.

Civilization is proscribing in the country a very charming thing: the thatched roofs of cottages covered with moss, and surmounted by the iris, with its sharp leaves and rich violet-coloured flowers. The tiles and slates that flatter the pride of the owners are far from flattering our eyes to an equal degree.

To the dead mosses succeed ferns. Ferns have large feathery leaves, which have altogether the appearance of the wings of birds. The fructification of the ferns is very singular: under the leaves, or rather on the under side of the leaves, you may see, regularly ranged, several lines of brown-coloured rings; these rings are formed by the seeds, which are as if glued upon the inferior epidermis of the leaf. In some species, these seeds are enclosed in a membrane which opens.

The learned have taken possession of the ferns; they call the seeds *spores;*—pray, don't ask me why. The little packets of seeds have received the name of *spores;* others call them *sporanges;* the ring which surrounds them, and which very properly has been called simply a ring, in the same manner as they might have called the seeds seeds, and the packets of seeds packets of seeds—the ring was first called

gyrus; but other savants arose, and have decked it with the name of *symplokium.* The membrane which covers the seeds was at first called *cridusium,* then *involucrum,* then *tegumentum,* then *perisporangium;*—I don't think they ever thought of calling it *a membrane.*

There is a species of fern called *Ophioglossum,* which had the reputation of being a cure for the bite of serpents; at a later period it was proved to be of no avail against the bite of serpents, but was excellent in promoting the growth of hair; it is in reality good for nothing but to make mattrasses for children, and form, by its decayed parts, earth in which larger vegetables may grow.

The learned, a long time ago, classed the ophioglosse, and pronounced that it was an *Osmond;* but this fern has since been unmasked by other men of science; it has been turned out from among the Osmonds as an intruder; it is now nothing but a *Botrichium.*

Oh, kind Heaven! hast thou permitted these learned ones thus to persecute the plants which are spread over the earth, and to annoy and weary those who do really love them to such a degree as almost to make them hateful to them?

Behold in all parts of the grass, the margeline and the white chickweed, which present to the little birds, all the year round, a well-furnished table; and, in order that they may never want, the chickweed is endowed with a fecundity that no other plant possesses: in the course of one year, the chickweed has time to germinate, to shed its seed, and bear others, seven or eight times. Seven or eight generations of chickweed cover the earth every year: it occupies the field naturally, and invades our gardens; it is almost impossible to destroy it; besides, of all the herbs naturally inhabiting the earth, which dispute the soil with the usurpers we introduce, the chickweed is that which injures our cultivation the least; one would say that it wished to be tolerated, it scarcely has any hold on the earth, with its few fine slender roots.

It is a very curious thing to observe with what promptness *autochtonous* plants, as the historians say,—that is to say, aborigines of the soil,—return to the charge in gardens that are neglected.

THE NEGLECTED GARDEN.—P. 90.

Leave your garden, make a journey, and return after a year's absence.

Certain little running trefoils, dog-grass, nettles, and chickweed cover the earth in such profusion in a few weeks, that they seem to wish to devour all the substance, in order that there may be none left for the strangers; they starve and smother the low plants; the trees which we have imposed upon the soil appear to brave their efforts, but the ivy climbs slowly from their feet to their summit, embraces them closely, and dominates over them triumphantly with its green garlands. From that time the tree is conquered, it must succumb; there comes a season in which trees have lost their leaves; it is the season in which high winds begin to prevail; in general their naked branches resist, because they afford little hold for the wind, but the close leaves of the ivy form a sail which receives it, makes the tree bend, and frequently breaks it; lichens have helped it, they have covered the trunk and the branches of the tree with a cuirass that has deprived it of the mild influences of the rain and the sun; it has lost much of its strength, when the ivy, by means of the winds, brings it down upon the grass.

Brambles, on their part, armed with sharp points, spring up to the assault of the shrubs. Like that giant, the son of Tellus, who fought with Hercules, and recovered his strength every time he touched the earth, the bramble takes root at every point of its long branches that comes in contact with the soil; it forms arches and inextricable nets; it embraces and strangles them.

This is not all: the revolt is propagated among the plants which we believed to be our allies, or the most faithful and submissive of our slaves.

The wild rose has caused the king we imposed upon him to die with hunger, and insolently raises his thorny branches around the withered and crownless head of the dethroned monarch.

The almond-tree upon which we had grafted the peach, has denied his sap to the usurper; the peach branch is dead, but the almond has thrown out numerous shoots, its own children, which it nourishes with the affection of a parent.

The piece of water is become a marsh filled with frogs;

the grass has disjointed the marble of the basin; the walks you had traced, covered with gravel, and rolled so many, many times, are now hidden by a thick coat of grass; whilst the grass plats, which you kept so smooth, so free from foreign weeds, these grass plats are invaded by the wild trefoil, moss, and all sorts of plants and mushrooms.

Everything is changed, everything is destroyed, the exiles have returned, the slaves have broken their chains, the usurpers and tyrants are destroyed, your garden is more wild than the most neglected field. There is a terrible reaction against man: the indigenous plants are in the effervescence of triumph, they give themselves up to saturnalia, to the orgies of vegetation and liberty.

LETTER XIV.

THE VIOLET—ANTS—THE POWER OF LOVE—MIRACLES.

My turf is full of violets of all the known sorts. Now here is another flower that has had great difficulty in triumphing over the insipidities and the common places of the little versifiers who have "babbled" about it upon hearsay, and all one after the other. No one will accuse me of ill-will towards the violet, I who have made an entire plat of it! and see what care I have taken of them, see how I have shaded them with trees in order that the sun's rays may be softened before they reach them! The black American walnut, the yellow-wooded ash, acacias, with their rose-coloured and white blossoms, the white poplar, whose leaves are lined with silver, the service-tree, with its branches of coral, the ebony with its golden clusters, the red chestnut-tree, with its great rosy thyrses, the beech with its purple foliage, are all only there

to afford a salutary shade to my violets during the heats of summer. Well! I must unveil the hitherto misunderstood violet; I love it, but I know that it is the sign of invincible passions; I cannot be undeceived, since I know it, and I love it as it is.

All versifiers, all romance writers, poets of the shepherd's pipe or the reed, are about to rise up in insurrection against me, against me who have already taught them that they cannot dance at all upon fern, and with great difficulty under nut-trees, two things under pretext of which there have been three thousand verses made, at least!

The violet is not modest!

Why did you say that the violet was modest? because it conceals itself under the grass. The violet does not conceal itself under the grass, it is concealed there by nature. No one is modest from being born in an humble and obscure situation.

Why don't you say that gold is modest; gold which conceals itself in the bowels of the earth, and which, even when found, frequently disguises itself in some mineral which has very little the air of being gold?

Why don't you say diamonds are modest; diamonds that are concealed in the earth even more secretly than gold, and which must be broken and cut to bring out their splendour?

Why don't you say pearls are modest; pearls which are only found in the depths of the ocean?

But the violet! the violet is born in the grass, it is true; but what stratagems does it employ to get out of it! besides the colours which it affects, and which make it easily distinguished, does it not exhale that delicious perfume which would reveal it even to a blind man? The modest violet, indeed! do you see to what it has attained? It has covered the heads of the Church, the bishops and the archbishops, with its livery; black is the mourning of all the world, violet has become the black of kings, and the mourning of the purple—the modest violet!

But observe its allurements, its coquetries: here it is white, there it is as double as a little rose, white, violet, grey, and rose-coloured!

When the world thought proper to mix it up with politics,

far from stealing away from the orations that were prepared for it, it had the charlatanism to exhibit itself tri-colour! Look at this one; its outward corolla is violet, its internal petals are blue and rose-coloured; disguised thus, the gardeners call it the "violette de Bruneau."

The violet modest! it has been proscribed, persecuted, exiled,—all which is nothing but so many coquetries.

The violet modest! Go to the opera, two hundred women have bouquets of violets in their hands.

How well it avenges itself for being born in the shade!

But I must reveal to you another *ruse* which it employs to retain our admiration; other flowers permit their perfumes to be preserved in essences; perfumers sell us in the winter odour of roses, odour of jasmine, odour of heliotropes, and of a dozen other flowers. The violet alone refuses to separate its odour from itself, it is to be met with nowhere but in its own corolla; perfumers are obliged to make, with the root of the Iris of Florence, a certain false and acrid violet odour, of which every returning spring compels us to acknowledge the insufficiency.

"You wish to inhale the odour of violets, my sweet, fair friend," says the violet to a lady very fond of its perfume,—"wait till I return; inhale the scent of roses, or of jasmine, there is no need of roses and jasmines to procure you that pleasure, perfumers put their odours into bottles; but *for me*, my dear, you must wait."—And this is the modest violet!

The violet is a sort of Cincinnatus, such as modern times produce, who only retire to their country and turn their hands to the plough, upon condition that they shall be there sought for in order to be made consuls, generals, or dictators.

The ancient poets pretend that when Jupiter had metamorphosed Io into a heifer, he gave birth to the violet, in order to present her with herbage worthy of her; it was this that made me form the idea of having a plat entirely composed of violets.

There often exhales from certain flowers something more and even better than perfumes; I mean certain circumstances of life with which they were associated, and with which they inseparably dwell in the mind, or rather in the heart, as the hamadryads were not able to quit their oaks! And may

there not exist some such cause for my extreme partiality for the violet? Perhaps—but no;—there are some memories too holy for friendship even—we are travelling round a garden—not laying bare scarcely cicatrised wounds.

Upon a stalk of groundsel there is a caterpillar formed of black and yellow rings, dining with an apparently good appetite; I will catch it: on putting my finger to it, it falls to the ground rolled up into a ball, and lies quite motionless. It will not be long before it spins a thin cocoon, from which it will not come out in less than a year, in the form of a little moth, as richly clothed as it was in its first shape, but it will be of a very different colour. Its head, its corselet, and its body will be of a beautiful black; its upper wings will be of a grey black, upon which will be marked a line of a bright carmine, with a spot of the same colour underneath, forming on each wing a kind of point of admiration. The inferior wings, and the under part of the butterfly, will be of this same carmine. It carries its wings in the form of a roof.[1]

Ants are marching through the grass as we would march through a thick forest; there are for them, between these closely growing blades, routes, roads, and foot-paths.

Many tales have been told about ants, many fables imagined and invented; falsehoods have been heaped upon falsehoods, and yet in the accounts of the false wonders related, the narrators have stopped far short of the real marvels.

Ants have no granaries in which, during summer, they store provisions for the coming winter.

La Fontaine said so:—but La Fontaine was mistaken. La Fontaine had as much wit and *bonhommie* as any man; but he was not perfectly acquainted with all the actors he brought upon the stage. A crow could not carry a cheese, nor would a fox covet it, if it could. La Fontaine, in this respect, resembles translators, who, although well acquainted with Latin, translate excellent Latin into very bad English. They may be fairly reminded, that, in order to translate, it is not sufficient to take something away from one language, they must know how to convey it skilfully into another. La Fontaine was well acquainted with men, but had but little knowledge

(1) *Callimorpha Jacobæa.* It is one of the very few Lepidoptera whose wings are alike on both sides.—Ed.

of the animals under whose forms he wished to represent them.

Let us watch that ant. Do you remember we have already met with the ant under the leaves of a white rose-tree, when it was tickling the aphides, in order to make them yield a saccharine liquid of which ants are very fond? Here they are in great numbers; we must be near the ant-hill.

Three sorts of ants dwell in this little subterraneous city; the females, the males, and the people; the people have no sex, and do the work of the community, the males and females do no labour.

Their subterraneous abode is constructed with much art; little galleries terminate, at intervals, in more extensive places, supported by pillars; all this is done with earth and a sort of slime, by means of which the working ants make a mortar.

This is the busy period of their lives. Both males and females have wings, for they must leave the earth, as it is in the air their nuptials are accomplished. They soon descend from *the clouds, as many other lovers do;* the males soon die: but the females have many cares; in the first place, as they stand in no more need of their wings, they tear them off themselves, if they do not happen to prefer having it done by the workers, who would not fail to deprive them of them quickly. In fact, the time for frivolous adornments and pleasures is over; they have entered upon the serious business of life; they must remain upon the ground. The females then wander about through their grotto, and let fall, at hazard, their little eggs,* of which nightingales are so fond, the workers pick them up and gather them together in heaps in the places which separate the galleries. The larvæ are soon hatched, and are not long before they spin themselves little cocoons: when the moment comes for their issuing from their confinement, the workers tear the cocoons, and thus facilitate the operation; then they carefully extend and smooth the wings of the males and females. From these eggs are born, in fact, not only ants of both sexes, but the workers also, who have no wings: during several days food is brought to the newly born, and then they are allowed to go out.

* M. Karr is in error here. The "eggs" which the nightingales eat are really the cocoons in which the pupa attains its perfect state.—Ed.

There are several species of ants which seldom quit their dwelling, but these are like pastoral nations, they dig their ant-hill beneath the roots of certain herbs or grasses much relished by aphides, when they transport thither those little green cows, which find in the roots, laid bare by the ants, a nourishment which they transmit to what may be called the cow-keepers, in the form of a saccharine liquor.

Whither are those ants going in such close battalion? I will not say with Virgil: *nigrum it campis agmen*, a black battalion marches across the fields. These are of a different species, they are of a red or russet colour, and are on their way to attack a hill of black ants.

We may fancy we see the Cimbri and the Teutons with their fair hair, invading the countries of the south.

They have discovered the fort of their enemy, and descend to the assault, spreading death and terror. Becoming immediately acquainted with the place, they bear away the eggs and the larvæ of the black ants in triumph to their own retreats. There they will see them born, and bring them up in obedience and in ignorance of their true family. These black ants become the Helots, the slaves, of the red ants, who make them work with them for their own profit.

If, my friend, you have got rid of the habit of measuring the importance of things by the size of those who perform them, you will readily confess that there is no difference between these insects which live under the grass and men who walk upon it. If the size be of such vast importance, horses, oxen, camels and elephants are much above man. Can you find me, in the annals of the military glory of man, a battle which can be otherwise described than that of these ants before our eyes? And when we think that the Sovereign Creator and Master of men and ants beholds them from on high, can we convince ourselves that the one can have really so much more importance in His eyes than the others? How many men there are who would smile at seeing us looking at ants, and who think that God has his eyes constantly upon them, and passes his eternity in observing what they think of him!

Have we not, as these ants have, wings which we unfold at the period at which love raises us to the heavens; these

wings, are they not, sooner or later, torn from us by the necessities of the human condition, by other people who, strangers to the ravishing poetries of love, bring us back to the flat realities of their existence, and chain us down to the earth among them, to employ ourselves there with vile calculations and shameful lucre?

Seriously, are you not surprised at the wonders which surround man, and which he does not take the pains to look at? Are you not ashamed of the distance you may have travelled, of all the fatigues you have undergone, of all the dangers you have encountered, when you compare the accounts you are able to give with those which I describe without leaving my home? It is in vain that you reckon, in order to re-establish the equilibrium, upon the embellishments which every traveller adds to his canvass; I tell you nothing but truths; but truths that you could not have invented. Falsehood is always obliged to submit to the perplexing care of resembling truth; truth holds on its march unimpeded by this mean, embarrassing consideration.

This reminds me of one of the most amusing fairy tales I ever read:—and I have read many, for I loved them dearly in by-gone days.

Three princes were sent by the king, their father, to bring back wonders from distant countries: the one whose present should be the most extraordinary was to succeed him on the throne. The youngest, whom the tale-teller evidently favours, brought back a walnut, and his brothers smiled disdainfully. The walnut was cracked, and there came out of it a hazel-nut, the hazel-nut contained a pea, the pea a grain of hemp seed, the grain of hemp seed a grain of millet; the grain of millet was opened, and a piece of cloth was drawn from it twenty ells long.

When I read greedily so many beautiful stories, when I saw so many genii, enchanters, fairies, beautiful princesses and loving and brave princes, many times was I wont, at the end of the volume, to sit and carry on the vision in my thoughts; then I awoke, and wept with grief at only living in life, instead of living in fairy tales; but I very early discovered that real life contains a hundred times more wonders than these charming fables:—and I became reconciled to my fate.

When in love, I felt myself covered with the enchanted armour which rendered knights invulnerable. My strength appeared to me invincible, and my courage above my strength. The thought of her I loved was a talisman; her name, a magic word which triumphed over obstacles and rendered everything powerless before me.

One day, I plunged into the water to endeavour to save an unfortunate man who was drowning; he seized me, and clung around me like a serpent; I was on the point of perishing with him—I pronounced the name of Magdeleine, and, animated by a supernatural strength, I regained the surface of the water, bearing the drowning man with one arm, and swimming with the other.

At another time I wrote to her:—

"They want to marry you; that happiness which another promises you I will give you. Do you wish for riches, gold? —I shall have them; speak, what do you wish for?—there is nothing above me or my powers. Do you wish for palaces of marble, or gold, to tread under your feet? Do you wish for honours? Do you wish to be a queen? Magdeleine, everything is yours! everything the world contains; for, I feel it, no one will be able to dispute with me that by which I may attain you. Wait a year, wait a month, wait a day, and I will bestow a crown upon you." . . .

And I was true; I felt that I had the power to do all this. And, another day, when she had told me that she loved me, I left her abode so exalted, so lofty, that I stooped as I went for fear of unhooking some star, or setting fire to my hair; and I endeavoured to avoid running against the persons I met with, for fear of breaking them to shivers like glass.

The flowers began to talk to me: the white rose had nothing but perfumes for others; for me it had soft words which it breathed into my heart; the honeysuckle had for my lips sweet kisses, and exhaled for me alone, not its ordinary perfume, but the odour of the breath of her I loved. The winds even brought me soft and mysterious voices.

And then, all at once, I don't know what wicked enchanter intruded himself among so many miracles. Magdeleine became a woman very like other women; and I,—I was changed into I don't know what stupid animal. Flowers were nothing

but flowers for me as well as for other people. I could make nothing out of the whisperings of the winds in the tree-tops. The honeysuckle only offered me the same odour which it presented to every vulgar nose. From that time I have discovered nothing marvellous in myself; my early years, like prodigal mothers, ruined and disinherited my latter ones.

But I became a spectator in life, and I looked about me.

Then, by observing others, I found that I had blossomed as the flowers blossom, that my soul had bloomed, and had exhaled its perfume, which is love; then my rich corolla had withered and fallen off; that this was all to be so; that I had finished my part, and had acted wisely in sitting down as comfortably as I could, to look on and observe other men.

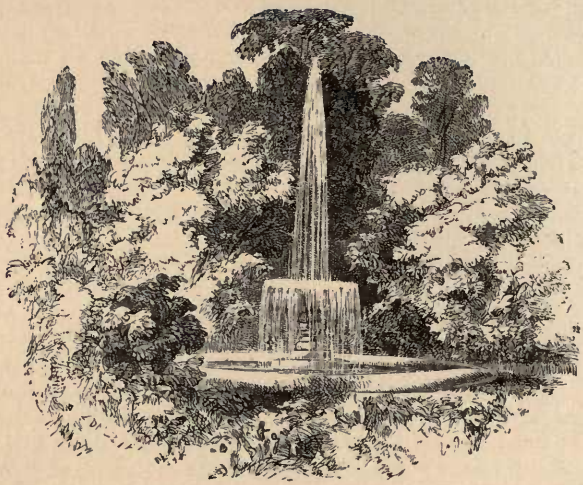
From that I proceeded to the observation of nature, and I again met with all the wonders of my beloved fairy tales; and I happened to recollect the grain of millet and the famous piece of cloth; and I said to myself—"Well! what is there so extraordinary in that?"

In fact, here is a little grain much smaller than that of the millet; here is the seed of the œnothera. Put it in the earth; there will spring up from it a tall and beautiful plant, with leaves and flowers and a delicious odour, yielding five or six hundred seeds, from which will come five or six hundred plants. This single little grain contains infinite generations of similar plants, with their leaves, their flowers, and their perfumes.

You put it in the earth to-day: well! all the men who now cover the globe shall be dead, and there will still continue to issue from it other flowers, and other seeds which will engender other flowers.

What has become of your false miracle, and your wretched twenty ells of cloth?

Why do you put twenty ells of cloth in your grain of millet? It contained much more than that; it contained beautiful stalks with long pendent ears; it contained that which might cover the earth in less than ten years. Who can count the number of birds that might be fed from the produce of that millet seed?



LETTER XV.

THE TULIPS, AND THEIR STORY.

I KNEW a man who had always been happy until the moment when some one sent him a present of a dozen tulip roots.

I never saw but one man more embarrassed, and that was a merchant of Marseilles, to whom an African prince sent two tigers and a panther, begging him to keep them for his sake.

The poor man asked some one if tulips would grow in water on a chimney, as hyacinths do, and was assured they would not. He went to see a friend who was a great amateur of tulips, and offered him his twelve bulbs. His friend answered somewhat haughtily, that he sometimes gave away tulips, but that he never accepted any; not caring to see his flower-beds dishonoured by any flower without a name or of base extraction; besides, those which he possessed had been sown and cultivated by himself; it was a sort of family into which he was not willing to admit strangers.

Our friend was a bachelor, and spent not more than an eighth part of his income. "Peter," said he to his servant, "M. Réault will have nothing to do with my tulips; to whom can I give them?" Peter said that the yard in which the dog was allowed to run had originally been a little garden, for two lilacs and an acacia proved it; that they had only to turn up the earth to have a hundred times more room than could be wanted for twelve tulips; and that on the morrow he would set about it. Accordingly, Peter rose early and began to dig. He had bought a spade and a rake for eight francs, and his master began to think the tulips dear, and that it was really a pity M. Réault would not accept them. The following night the dog, which till that time had been allowed to be loose in the yard, revenged himself for his captivity by frightful howlings. Next day Peter said to his master—"Sir, I have turned up earth enough to plant a thousand tulips, but there is one thing that stops me; I don't know at what depth they should be planted."—"Oh! you must take your chance; they are sure to come up some time or other."—"But, Sir, I have a cousin who is a gardener, and I have told him to come this morning. Monsieur will only have to pay him for half-a-day's work, and the tulips will be planted properly."

At a house at which he called in the course of the day, a lady said to him—"I am told you are planting a garden."

"No," said he, "I am simply putting in the earth twelve tulip roots which M. Bernard sent me."

"Oh, then, they are most likely something beautiful; he is considered a great amateur; besides, people don't make a present of a dozen tulip roots, unless they are rare and valuable plants."

"I really know nothing about the matter."

"How is it that you have not had a garden before this time?"

"I never thought of it."

"Mr. Delarue has a charming garden; I and my sister went to see it the day before yesterday."

"Ah! if I had a garden, then you would come and see it?"

"Very probably we might."

Arnold returned home with his mind very much preoccupied; he had remarked this lady for some time past,

but the disagreeable sensation he had felt upon hearing of her visit to Mr. Delarue, warned him that he took more interest in her than he had been aware of. The gardener was preparing the holes for the tulips, when Arnold stopped him, and said, "Do you think a good garden could be made of this yard?"

"Impossible, Sir; your yard is not larger than my hand."

"That is true; I should like, however, to have a beautiful garden."

"Give me the ground, Sir, and I will soon provide you with that."

"I have but this yard."

"Why, then, Sir, don't you buy that large piece of ground which separates Monsieur's house from that of M. Durut, and which M. Durut wishes to sell? It is said it can be bought for a mere nothing."

"Let us look at the piece of ground."

The enclosure was large; some parts of it even were already planted; a handsome screen of poplars separated it from the garden of M. Durut. Application was made to the notary; the thing was to be sold cheap. Arnold purchased, paid down the money, and the gardener was set to work. The poor dog, which during three nights had not for one minute ceased howling, was reinstated in the yard.

"Shall I really have a handsome garden?" frequently asked M. Arnold.

"Certainly, Sir," replied the gardener; "you shall have such things as are seen nowhere else; you shall have green roses, black roses, and blue roses."

"Indeed."

"Yes, Sir; I have the receipt to make them, in an old book of my father's."

"And is it very desirable to have green, blue, and black roses?"

"Yes, Sir; nobody else has any."

Arnold never quitted his garden or the gardener; he planted and took up again; everything must be ready by the following spring. M. Durut, the vendor of the enclosure, paid him first one visit, then another; and soon, whenever he perceived M. Arnold in his garden he joined him. "Fortunately," thought Arnold, "when the poplars are in leaf, he will not be able to

see I am here." M. Durut was a man of fifty years of age, invariably dressed in an old great-coat and a shabby hat, who was at war with the whole neighbourhood, and was ruining himself with lawsuits, one brought on by another. As he was very much engaged with his lawsuits, he was talking of them incessantly, and adorned the accounts he gave of them with all sorts of invectives and maledictions against his adversaries; in addition to which disadvantage, he never seemed to remember that he had sold his enclosure. When he spoke of it, he always said *my garden*, and found fault with everything that was done in it; it was much better managed in his time. "What do you take up this for? What do you plant that for? You are spoiling everything." Arnold was a mild man, but the annoyance made him savage. One day, when M. Durut had given him a rather stronger dose than common, he said to Peter, "When M. Durut comes again, I will not be at home."

The next day M. Durut perceived Arnold through the window, and came and rang at his bell. Peter, according to his master's orders, told him he was gone out.—"Gone out! gone out! why I this moment saw him *in my garden*—and in M. Durut went. Arnold was furious, and could scarcely restrain himself. This time he did not put himself out of the way, and by means of an oratorical precaution, consisting of a "*Permit me*," he continued to assist the gardener, although the latter had six or seven journeymen round him. When M. Durut was gone, Arnold said to Peter,—

"What did I tell you?—did not I desire you not to let M. Durut in?"

"Certainly, Sir, but he saw you in the garden, and would come in, in spite of me."

"That was one reason the more why he should not have persisted; he ought to understand that I wish to be alone. If you let him in again, I will discharge you."

"But then, Sir, you must not show yourself in the garden."

Arnold then broke forth into an eloquent invective. "What the deuce! did I buy this garden of this old rogue to have no free enjoyment of it? Who could have dreamt that the property was subject to the intolerable nuisance of his presence? The garden is mine—I have paid for it—and I will not pay

for it over again, at a thousand times higher price than the first, by enduring the annoyance which this eternal litigator inflicts upon me daily. I did hope to have the patience to wait till the poplars were in leaf; but, do you hear, Peter, *I will* not see him again."

M. Durut presented himself the next day. The same answer from Peter; the same persistence on the part of M. Durut.

"But, Peter, I am sure he is at home; I only this moment saw him in *my garden*."

"Very likely, Sir; but master told me himself that he was not at home."

"Then, Peter, go and tell him I am here."

"It's of no use, Sir; there is nobody at home."

"Ah, that's all very well,—go, I say, and tell him I am here."

"No, Sir, I shall not go; master would discharge me."

M. Durut returned home, and called to Arnold out of his window—"Hilloa! neighbour!" Arnold pretended to be very busy, and made no reply; but M. Durut was not discouraged by such a trifle as that. "Hilloa! neighbour!" cried he; "Monsieur Arnold!" Arnold could have thrashed him well with all his heart. "Hilloa! gardener; tell M. Arnold I am calling him." Arnold left the garden. "The leaves are very backward!" sighed he.

The next day M. Durut returned to the charge, met with the same repulse from Peter, and went again to his window to call Arnold. The latter for a time affected deafness, but his patience was at length overcome.

"Well, Sir, I hear you plainly enough!" replied he.

"That's well," cried M. Durut. "Why, Peter persisted in saying you were not at home, although I told him I saw you in *my garden;* he would not admit me!"

"Peter was right, Sir; I am not at home."

"How, neighbour? what does that mean?"

"That means, Sir, that there are moments in which I wish to be alone; and if we are to continue good neighbours, we must not incommode each other."

"That is to say, Sir, that your door is shut against me."

"That is only to say, Sir, that you will do me great plea-

sure by coming to see me occasionally; but that each of us must be at liberty in his own home."

"Oh, I understand you, Sir; I will not inconvenience you again!"

"That is all I require, Sir."

"Very well, Sir."

And M. Durut shut his window violently. Arnold fancied himself happily delivered from annoyance; but from that day all the stale vegetables, bones of meat, and other refuse from the house of Durut, were thrown over the wall into Arnold's garden. I will not venture to mention all that was done in this way. At first, Arnold had them removed without complaining; but one day, when the nuisance had been more serious than usual, he perceived M. Durut at his window, and called him. M. Durut took no notice. Arnold called a second time; M. Durut then condescended to hear him, and answered—

"I am not at home, Sir."

"Come, come, Sir; I am not now disposed to joke."

"Oh, Sir, every one ought to be at liberty in his own home!"

"Certainly, Sir; but I insist upon your not throwing your refuse, in the manner you do, into my garden."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta, ta!"

And M. Durut left the window. Arnold ordered his servants to throw everything back, for the future, that should come over the wall from M. Durut's. M. Durut had a complaint before the mayor, that M. Arnold threw refuse over into his garden. The mayor summoned Arnold, and reprimanded him, Arnold replied that he only returned that which had been thrown into his garden. The mayor did not believe him. Arnold grew angry, and, by some hasty expressions, prejudiced the mayor against him. Three days afterwards, a summons was brought by an officer to Arnold's house. The king, according to the formula employed by officers, who thus attribute to the king strange words and strange things, commanded Arnold, *within twenty-four hours at the utmost*, to cut down the poplars which formed a screen between the two properties, the document being embellished with the most formidable threats in the event of its not being obeyed. Arnold was astounded, and went to consult his man of business. The

latter came and looked at the trees, and said, "They must be cut down; the law is precise. The trees must not be less than six feet from the party-wall; and there are but four feet between them and the wall."

"But he planted them himself!"

"No matter; the two properties were then his own. They must be cut down."

"And suppose I do not cut them down?"

"You will be compelled."

The poplars were magnificent; covered with their young leaves of a transparent green, they made the most beautiful green curtain imaginable. Arnold was in despair. *She* for whom he had made the garden had promised to come and see it as soon as the tulips should be in bloom, which could not be many days later. If this screen were cut down, the whole effect of his garden would be destroyed. He called the gardener, and asked him if it were possible to remove the poplars to a distance of six feet from the wall.

"Certainly, Sir."

"And will they live?"

"No; because it is not the season for transplanting. A month ago there would have been no difficulty."

He repaired again to the office of his man of business.

"Make the matter up as well as you can: I must keep my poplars."

"That depends upon your neighbour."

"Go and see him: offer him money."

The man of business was very ill received, and M. Durut only replied to his proposals by a fresh summons. Arnold carried it to his man of business.

"Can you, by any chicanery, preserve my poplars for a fortnight?"

"Yes, by opposing the summons, and by citing your adversary to prove the fact. We, on our part, will maintain before the tribunal, that the trees are six feet and a half from the wall; the tribunal will appoint proper persons to ascertain the truth; these persons will make their report; and we shall gain by that means a good fortnight. But it will cost you very dear; you will have all the expenses to pay, and will be obliged to cut down the trees at last."

" Well, never mind; they must not be cut down till after a fortnight."

The man of business carried on the contest, and it fell out exactly as he had foreseen it would: only the weather became colder, the tulips were not open, and the tulips alone were the object of all these cares: he was obliged to cut down the poplars. Some one advised Arnold to have trees painted on the wall; that was ugly enough, to be sure, but at this season of the year there was no such thing as planting.

Mademoiselle Aglaé was to come two days after, the twelve tulips were fully out, the weather was magnificent, the garden was filled with all the flowers of the season. Arnold went to call upon M. Réault, for Mademoiselle Aglaé had said, " We will bring two or three of our friends with us; but nevertheless have somebody there; it will be more proper."

M. Réault, he who had declined the roots, was in company with several others who came to see his tulips. He had a wand in his hand, and exhibited them with an emphasis which none can conceive but those who have seen in this situation an amateur of tulips among his blooming flowers.

The party was assembled under a tent, between two beds of tulips planted in regular rows. M. Réault stopped for a moment to see who came in, and when he perceived it was only one of the profane, he bade him " Good morning," with a nod, and, without quitting his serious tone and manner, resumed his demonstration; he was then before a tulip of a white ground, streaked with violet.

" Gentlemen," said he, " this is *Vandaël;* it is *a pearl of the kind;* it is not in all its beauty; the month of April was *cruel* for our plants, and March was perfidious."

" This is *Joseph Deschiens;* we know nothing to be compared to this superb plant; the ground is white, and the stripes violet."

" But," interrupted Arnold, " was not that which you described just now, and which you called Vandaël, likewise white and violet?" M. Réault smiled disdainfully, looked at the other spectators, and, without condescending to reply to Arnold, continued,—

" Here is *Gluck,* white and violet, a magnificent plant of seventh line."

"Your pardon!" again interrupted Arnold; "but *Vandaël* and *Joseph Deschiens* are likewise white and violet."

This time M. Réault shrugged his shoulders with a movement of impatience; one of the spectators replied to him by a nearly similar sign, but which, however, had this particular shade, that it exhorted M. Réault to have pity on the profane, and exercise his patience. This gentleman remained a little behind with Arnold, and said in a low voice, "You are not an amateur, Sir?"

"Not yet, Sir; I have only twelve tulips."

"Ah! that's very few indeed; there are eighteen hundred here, and all different."

"But, Sir, I have only yet looked at three, and they appeared to me perfectly alike."

"Ah, Sir! these three plants are no more alike than day and night; for experienced eyes, there is no resemblance between them."

"No resemblance! that appears rather strong, Sir."

"It is you, Sir, who are not strong upon the subject of tulips. All three are violet and white, it is true; the ground of all three is white, and the streaks are violet; but the violet is not the same."

"Ah, I perceive!—thank you, Sir."

"Don't name it, Sir."

Both rejoined M. Réault; he was pointing with his wand to a white and rose-coloured tulip.

"*Czarteriski*, gentlemen, a flower of fifth line; allow me to point out the whiteness of the *onglets;* and what *a carriage!* Gentlemen, what a carriage!"

And whilst saying these words, M. Réault pressed his wand against the green stalk of the tulip, and appeared to make the greatest efforts to bend it, without, however, succeeding.

"It is a *rod*, gentleman; it is *a bar of iron.*"

"Sir," said Arnold to him who had already had compassion on him, and afforded him a charitable explanation, "do you believe that M. Réault really presses so hard with his wand upon the tulip?—and is it also a great advantage that the stalk of such a light flower should be *a bar of iron*, as he says it is?"

"Yes, certainly, Sir; that is a condition without which we never admit a tulip into our flower-beds."

"*Napoleon 1st*," said M. Réault, before a white and rose-coloured tulip; "that is a plant I strongly recommend to your attention."

"Well, Sir," said Arnold to the complaisant amateur, "if it were not for what you have told me, I should venture to say a strange thing. The rose colour of these tulips is probably not the same shade of rose colour; but if I had come here alone, I should have fancied I saw two tulips, each multiplied nine hundred times, the one white and violet, the other white and rose."

"Zounds! Sir; when a person knows nothing ——"

The demonstration was here stopt for a moment. The other amateur was seized with admiration, absolutely overcome before the *Incomparable Purple*. "Ah, Sir," said he to M. Réault, "permit me to stop here! Friend," cried he to an under-gardener, "please to bring me a chair." The chair being brought, he sat down, with his two hands placed upon the top of his cane, and his chin upon his two hands; thus he remained without speaking, his eyes fixed and his mouth half open. The other left Arnold, and came to esctacise also behind his companion. As for M. Réault, he stood motionless, with a most ineffable smile playing on his lips. Arnold saw nothing in the *Incomparable Purple* but a white and red-coloured tulip, the shades of which appeared to him to be exactly repeated in four or five hundred others, before which they had passed in silence, or to which they had only accorded compliments called for by politeness. At length the enthusiast arose, and said—

"Monsieur Réault, I do not wish to trespass on the time of these gentlemen; but I shall request you to grant me permission to come alone, and pass an hour seated before your tulip."

"Sir, you do it too much honour."

"Sir, I only pay it the honour it merits."

"It must be allowed, Sir; for in such a case I do not pretend to any false modesty—it is a plant *of great merit!*"

"Sir, it is a jewel!"

"M. Réault," said Arnold, "I request your pardon; and

yours likewise, gentlemen. Permit me to say a word to M. Réault, and to leave you; I am waited for upon an affair of consequence." He took M. Réault aside, and said—

"To-morrow some friends mean to do me the honour to come and see my tulips."

"Your tulips!—What do you mean by your tulips?"

"Faith! only the twelve roots I offered to you, and which you refused."

"Ah! ah!"

"Will you do me the pleasure of coming?"

"What, to see your twelve roots?"

"To see me, and breakfast with me, with three or four other persons; at the same time, you can tell me if my tulips are good for anything; but I can tell you beforehand, you have not one of the twelve."

"Indeed!"

"It is true, I assure you."

"I should like to see that. At what hour?"

"Eleven."

"I will be punctual."

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow."

The next day Mademoiselle Aglaé and her sister came a little after eleven o'clock, but Arnold was disagreeably surprised to find they were accompanied by M. Dulaurier; M. Réault entered almost at the same instant. He and M. Dulaurier were acquainted, and made mutual excuses for not having yet been to see each other's tulips. "Ah, Sir!" said the one, "the month of March did me great injury." "Monsieur," said the other, "I must request your indulgence; the month of April has treated me sadly." Breakfast was announced; the ladies were *surprised*, declared they could eat nothing, and finished by becoming humanised. During breakfast, Arnold visibly lost his spirits: he could not help fancying he saw signs of intelligence pass between Mademoiselle Aglaé and M. Dulaurier, which rendered him a prey to horrible misgivings; but the sister of Mademoiselle Aglaé removed all doubts, by taking an early opportunity of announcing to him that her sister and M. Dulaurier were to be married in three weeks. Arnold then became aware that "uncertainty is the

worst of evils, until the moment in which reality comes to make us regret uncertainty" Arnold was stupefied by the blow; sometimes he remained sad and silent; and then he gave himself up to flights of very little probable and ill-sustained gaiety. He was joked about his painted wall, and his trees in oil, and at length they came to the tulips—the dozen tulips! They were tulips taken at hazard, and differing widely from each other. One was entirely of a beautiful yellow; another opened its calyx with so brilliant a red that the eye could not dwell upon it; this had a yellow ground, and upon this yellow ground were spread brown and black stripes; two of them had a white ground, like those of M. Réault, and of these two, one was streaked with violet, and the other with rose colour. M. Réault and M. Dulaurier looked at each other. M. Dulaurier smiled; but M. Réault, after several ill-repressed efforts, finished by giving vent to most violent explosions of laughter. The two ladies and Arnold looked at each other with some inquietude, fearing that he was seized with an attack of insanity; but, after five or six minutes, he recovered the power of speaking, although his words were interrupted by fresh peals of laughter,—"Ah, my dear Arnold, I am laughing too much, it makes me ill!—You call these?"

"Parbleu! why, tulips!"

"Tulips, my dear Sir! you will choke me, *parole d'honneur*," and off he went with a fresh fit of laughter. Arnold, who had, for other reasons, so much anger rankling in his heart, was but too happy to have an opportunity of showing ill-humour to some one; he only regretted that this same one was not M. Dulaurier. For want of a better subject, however, he coldly asked M. Réault if he would be kind enough, when his fit was over, to explain to him the subject of it.

"Oh, my dear Sir, don't be angry with me; really it is not my fault. I should be vexed beyond measure to offend you; but really this is too droll! particularly if you could but have seen yourself, when you told me that you called these tulips."

"But you, Sir; what name do you give these flowers?"

"What name! my dear Sir; I don't give them any name; they do not deserve one. Listen; Monsieur Dulaurier, speak—give your opinion; for I am anxious that M. Arnold should know that it is not I alone who consider his tulips rather

droll. Oh! la, la, la,—no more laughing—it makes one unwell to laugh in such a manner."

M. Dulaurier, who was more calm, explained to Arnold that about fifty years ago the amateurs of tulips had only tulips with a yellow ground, streaked with red and brown; that every tulip with a white ground was then rejected from all collections. At this period, as all imaginable follies had been exhausted for tulips with a yellow ground, the amateurs took it into their heads to begin again with an entirely new series of tulips with a white ground. After long debates among the revolutionists and the partisans of the ancient tulips, the white grounds prevailed, and the yellow grounds were expelled with disgrace from flower-beds, and publicly treated in books and pamphlets as disgusting flowers. Such as persisted in letting them bloom in their gardens, acquired the names of *fleurichons* and *curiolets*. As regards tulips of a single colour, they have never been admitted by the above-mentioned amateurs—either the partisans of the yellow grounds, or those of the white grounds; and as for your two tulips with the white ground, they are absurd, the petals being pointed.

Then a conversation was commenced between M. Dulaurier and M. Réault. "How singular," said the latter, "was the taste of our fathers! here is *bizarre noir*, which our ancestors considered cheap at ten crowns, and which I would not have at any price, even in my poultry-yard, among my hens."

"But," said M. Dulaurier, "is not this the *tulipe de Maëstricht*, which made such a noise in 1811 and 1812?"

"Yes, it is quite pitiable! Say no more about it."

At length the visit terminated, to the great joy of the unfortunate Arnold, who was able, when once alone, to give himself up to his grief and his anger.

From that day everything went on from bad to worse. Neighbour Durut kept a wound constantly open in his heart, *memorem iram*. In the space of four months, he brought five actions against Arnold. Under pretence that the party-wall required repairs, he had it pulled down and rebuilt at their joint expense. In the midst of the fine season, he sent the bricklayers into Arnold's garden, which they demolished. Arnold made a basin to receive rain water. M. Durut found out that the "Customs of Paris," article 217, does not permit sewers

or cesspools to be made within the distance of six feet from the party-wall, and this basin was only five feet and a third removed from it. This time Arnold's man of business did not agree with M. Durut. He answered, "that a basin was not necessarily a cesspool, and that several legislators had made that distinction; among others, Goupi, who observes, 'that the "Customs of Paris," by prescribing this distance of six feet, has not had it in view to obviate the damage that the filtration of waters might cause, since it does not require it for wells, although the same danger of filtration is encountered with regard to them; besides, at whatever distance may be the wells and cesspools, he who constructs them is always responsible for the damage which may be caused by filtration. The principal reason,'" says Goupi, as likewise said Arnold's man of business, "'is only to remove from neighbours' houses the bad odour which certain watery ditches and cesspools exhale.'" But, and here Degodets, another lawyer, is in accord with Goupi, the disposition of article 217 of the "Customs of Paris" cannot extend to the draining wells and ditches receiving rain water, which does not exhale a bad odour. The "Customs of Orleans," article 245, equally establishes this distinction, as Pelhier does positively, in his treatise of the "Contract de Société," article 5, upon the community of party-walls.

M. Durut replied; the man of business replied to him. The tribunals were appealed to, to judge the question: they granted that the man of business was right in his distinction, which was affirmed in appeal and in cassation. But Durut was not the man to be beaten by trifles; he commenced a fresh suit. In his new conclusions he admitted the definition and the distinction adopted by the tribunal; he demanded to prove that Arnold's basin merited the name of cesspool, and consequently came within the application of article 217 of the "Customs of Paris," and article 245 of the "Customs of Orleans." Experienced persons were named to go to the spot and enlighten the tribunal. Now, in the night which preceded the examination, Durut had thrown over the wall so much refuse, with impure water and filth, into the basin, that it was metamorphosed into an infectious pool, and consequently so declared to be by the examiners; which produced a condemnation with expenses against Arnold, obliging him to destroy

his basin. Another process compelled him to eat his pigeons, which *were devouring the house* of his neighbour. At length one day, in a fit of passion, he went so far as, I don't know how, to threaten to shoot M. Durut. The latter commenced a criminal action, which Arnold had no other means of stopping, but by purchasing, in a friendly way, and at a third more than its value, the property of M. Durut. In a word, at the end of two years, the twelve tulip roots cost Arnold the sum of 300,000 francs!

For my part, my friend, I cultivate flowers only for the sake of seeing them, and not for the pride of showing them. I have but about fifty tulips of all colours. I never reject any that will do me the honour to bloom in my garden, not even those according to the hearts of the great amateurs, and I have no neighbour, which reminds me of two remarkable aphorisms of some buffoon or other:

"Never have any neighbours; if you wish to live at peace with them."

"Never give anything to your children, if you wish they should entertain gratitude towards you equal to the benefit."

There are many philosophers who have written large books, without saying anything so reasonable.

LETTER XVI.

QUASI MARITIME.

We are now on the bank of a rivulet, which crosses the garden at its broadest part, and falls into a pool almost concealed by willows and reeds. We passed along the banks of this nameless river, which takes its rise in a hill covered with furze, a little above the old wood house. The rivulet steals along over a pebbly bed, and between verdant banks; plants delighting in freshness and moisture ornamenting both sides of its passage. The view is bounded by surrounding trees, beneath which a verdant bank arises, now decked with daisies and buttercups.

On one of the banks is a white poplar, a tree formerly consecrated to Hercules.

"Herculea bicolor, cum populus umbra."

The upper part of its large leaves, as deeply cut as those of a vine, is of a dark shining green, whilst the under part is

of a velvety white. The Romans made bucklers of the wood of this tree, on account of its lightness, and covered them with ox-hides. Of this tree Pliny says, *populus apta scutis.* In certain northern countries, it is said that a white poplar, in good soil, increases a shilling in value every year. They are generally cut down at the age of twenty years, as they are then supposed to have attained their full growth. This circumstance has given birth to a very interesting custom. When a daughter is born in the family of a respectable farmer, the father, as soon as the season will permit, plants a thousand young Ypréaux,* which are to constitute the dowry of the maiden, which grow as she grows, increasing in height and value as her virtues and beauty increase.

In the stem of the poplar is concealed a nest, the exterior of which is formed of moss and slender roots, and the interior delicately lined with hair and feathers. In it four or five white eggs, striped and spotted with brown, are carefully sat upon by a water-wagtail. Whilst the male bird is in search of game, we may see him walking along the bank of the rivulet, gracefully balancing his long tail, of ten black and two white feathers, the latter forming the edge or border; the top of his head and the under part of his neck are black; he wears a kind of white half-mask; the rest of his body is clothed in clouded grey and pearl grey. You may go close to him; if he flies away, it is only to return almost immediately; but it is more than probable he will only walk away, without disturbing his lively and graceful carriage. His purpose is to catch on the wing all sorts of flies, gnats, and tipulæ,† which have, as I have no doubt we shall soon discover, excellent reasons for flitting about over the surface of rivulets. The little female so sedulously employed at home, only differs from her mate in having a brown head, and in not wearing a plastron above the neck.

Nearer the water are large tufts of Iris of different sorts, shooting forth, from the bosom of their pointed leaves, stalks loaded with blossoms. Some are yellow; others violet; these entirely white, or white with a blue fringe; those yellow and brown; others yellow and blue; and a few pale blue.

* A sort of broad-leafed elm, apparently peculiar to the neighbourhood of Ypres.
† A kind of gnat.

The Iris delights only in the banks of waters. There is a species of it which is one of the great bounties of God, one of the greatest luxuries He has made for the poor.

I have seen the Colonnade of the Louvre, my good friend; I have seen the Palace of Versailles, and three or four other palaces in other countries, to which chance and the weariness of the places I quitted, rather than a wish to see those I visited, have led me. I here declare I have seen nothing so beautiful, nothing so rich as yonder little house, inhabited by poor woodmen, which I can perceive at a distance, through the trees and over the wall of my garden.

In the front are four magnificent columns, four large beech-trees, whose bark is as smooth as marble; their living capital is formed of branches and leaves, which yield a shelter from the sun, and delight the eye with colours as rich and more varied than those of the emerald. Birds have established their nests in them, and there sing. Linnets are the ordinary musicians of the poor; they sing to them upon a beautiful stage, amidst splendid decorations, by the light of a magnificent rising sun, a music always fresh, always young, which appears to float down from heaven; and nothing sad is mingled with their song. These charming actors sing because the sun shines, because they are young, because they are beautiful, because they love, because they are happy; whilst those whom the rich pay so extravagantly, sing because they are envious of each other, because they are avaricious, and because they are paid.

We must confess that if columns of stone and marble did not cost a great deal of money, they would be far from having the beauty of these columns, which live and which sing, where the capital changes its colour three or four times in every year, and which let fall such melodious sounds.

Architecture, in its greatest magnificence, invented the Corinthian capital, which is nothing but an imperfect imitation of five or six leaves of the acanthus. How is it we pay so dearly for the imitation of that which costs nothing? It is only from the principle I have before named: we only love to possess things, to humiliate those who possess them not. It is this that creates the value of diamonds—it extends

to our ideas of heaven itself, and sullies our hopes of happiness—it is the secret of the most shameful feelings of man.

From the foot of one of these beeches springs an ivy, which embraces it like a serpent with its powerful folds, and dominates over its head with its shining leaves and bunches of little green and black fruit, which is such favourite food with the thrush and the blackbird.

And I—did not I one day buy a little table supported by a column of carved wood? That column represented the trunk of a tree, around which turned an ivy: it was beautifully done as wood-carving, but the perfection of the arts is disgusting coarseness by the side of nature. Well, I paid ten pounds for this!—ten pounds, painfully gained by writing in obscurity, in my chamber,—useless, hate-breeding things,—when I might, for nothing, have seen such beautiful ivies ascend real sunlit trees, beneath the bright sky, with a heart full of joy, kindness, and love!

Behind these beautiful columns rises, and yet rises but little, a small house, covered with a thatch that extends on both sides considerably over the walls. In summer, a vine spreads its magnificent green, and in autumn, its purple tapestry over the whole front of the house.

But here is developed a luxury, enough to make the rich and the powerful burst with envy. A velvet, a thousand times more fine, more brilliant, more wavy, more rich, than that which is displayed with so much economy in the interior of palaces, of which such care is taken, lest it be rubbed or spoilt,—a green velvet entirely covers the thatch of the house, and that is a true and a beautiful luxury. The owners do not tremble on account of it; they are neither the slaves nor the victims of it; they allow it to be exposed to the wind and the rain—they cannot spoil it: when this shall no longer be fresh, others will come. This velvet is moss.

Then along the crest of the roof, from amidst their blade-like leaves, spring bunches of violet-coloured iris, bathing their gay blossoms in the air and the sun.

And none of these splendours wear out or become thread-bare, as happens to factitious riches. Next year, the moss will be thicker—next year the irises will have still more violet

flowers—next year the columns before the house will be taller and larger.

And what is the use of this velvet? Of no other use but to preserve from the rain, which glides over its silk, the poor straw of the poor inhabitants of that poor house! There is a luxury! Oh, yes! God loves the poor! Unfortunately, man is very stupid; he disdains gratuitous riches, in order to wear out his life in the pursuit of expensive poverties.

Certainly, the man who would live alone in a desert isle, would not trouble himself about rich clothes or sumptuous furniture. Then it is in order to exhibit them to others that we procure for ourselves, often with so much pain, and sometimes with so much infamy, all that can be called luxury. Well, and what effect does this magnificent exhibition produce upon others? No other but to inspire them with envy and hatred, and set them on the watch for your vices and your follies.

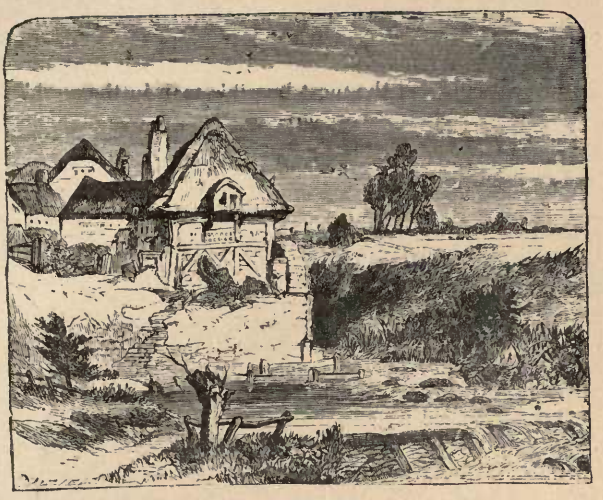
Let us return to the banks of our rivulet—traveller, and at the same time sedentary that I am!

With its foot in the water, the forget-me-not presents to us its spikes of little blue flowers. This pretty plant has received pretty names from unknown godfathers and godmothers,—from young godfathers, no doubt, from godfathers in love, and from charming and beloved godmothers too. The Germans call it, *Vergiss-mein-nicht;* the French, *Ne m'oublicz pas;* and the English, *Forget-me-not.*

I have related to you, my friend, a long time ago, that two lovers, who were to be married the next day, were walking at sunset on the banks of the Danube. The maiden perceived a bunch of *Vergiss-mein-nicht,* and wished to have it, to keep as a memorial of that beautiful and happy evening. The lover, in endeavouring to obtain it, fell into the river, and feeling his strength fail him—oppressed, stifled by the water—he threw to the bank the bunch of flowers, which he had pulled up in his efforts to save himself; he then sunk beneath the waves for ever. This adieu has been translated into the words which have from that time been the name of the flower, *Vergiss-mein-nicht,* or *Ne m'oubliez pas.*

Cattle which graze where it grows, are exceedingly fond of it,

and eat it down closely; but this injury only serves to make it bloom again in the autumn, which it would not otherwise have done. The learned are worse than the cattle; they dry it, and flatten it down in their herbals, and called it, *Myosotis scorpioides—Scorpion-shaped mouse's ear!* They have been reproached for giving it this name by a brother savant, named Charles Nodier, but who, as well as being learned, was a man of wit and sense.



LETTER XVII.

THE METAMORPHOSED RIVULET.

THE rivulet which passes through my garden, and issues from the side of a hill covered with gorse, has been for a long time a very happy rivulet. It crossed meadows, where all sorts of charming wild-flowers bathed and admired themselves in its tiny waves; then it entered my garden, where I had expected it, and prepared verdant banks for its reception. I planted upon its sides, and in its stream, all the plants which in the whole world blossom in the bosom or on the banks of pure waters. It crossed my garden, singing its melancholy song; and then, all perfumed with my flowers, issued out, crossed another meadow, and precipitated itself into the sea, over the abrupt sides of a rock, which it covers with foam.

It was a happy rivulet; it had absolutely nothing to do but what I have told you—to flow, to glide on, to be limpid, to murmur, between flowers and perfumes.

It led just the life I have chosen, marked out for myself, and which I follow,—when the world will have the kindness to let me alone—when the wicked, the intriguing, the rogues and the fools, do not force me to return to the combat—me, the most pacific and the most irascible man in the world!

But heaven and earth are envious of happiness and delicious idleness.

My dear brother Eugene, and the skilful engineer Sauvage, the inventor of *helices*, were one day chattering on the banks of this poor rivulet, and spoke very ill of it. "Now is not this," said my brother, "a pretty do-nothing of a rivulet, which goes merrily on, idling without shame, flowing in the sunshine, or creeping among the grass, instead of working, and paying for the ground it occupies, as an honest rivulet ought to do. Could it not grind coffee and pepper?"

"And sharpen tools?" answered Sauvage.

"And saw wood?" said my brother.

And I trembled for the rivulet; and I interrupted the conversation by crying very loudly, that these envious beings, these tyrants, would in the next place trample down my *Vergiss-mein-nicht!* Alas! I was only able to protect it against them. It was not long before a rascal came into the country, whom I frequently saw prowling along its green banks, on the side where it leaps into the sea. This man did not appear to me to have the air of one who came there to seek for rhymes, or awaken sweet remembrances, or even to let his thoughts fall asleep to the murmur of the water. "My friend," said he to the rivulet, "you glide along, you affect a quiet air, and you sing in a manner to create envy in your hearer, whilst I work and toil beyond my strength. It appears to me you could help me a bit; it is not a labour you are acquainted with, but I will teach you; you shall soon be in working condition. You must be very tired of leading such an idle life; it will amuse you to make files and sharpen knives." Shortly afterwards a wheel, machinery, and millstone, were brought to the rivulet. From that time it works; it turns a great wheel, which turns a smaller one, which turns the millstone. It sings still, but it is not that same softly monotonous and happily melancholy song it used to sing. There are cries and passion in the song of to-day; it bounds,

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it foams, it labours—it sharpens knives. It still crosses the meadow and my garden, then the other meadow; but at the end of it the man is there, who waits for it, and makes it work. I have only been able to do one thing for it: I have dug a fresh bed for it in my garden, so that it may wind about longer, and go out later; but it nevertheless finishes by going to sharpen knives. Poor rivulet! thou didst not sufficiently conceal thy happiness in the grass; thou hast murmured thy sweet song too loudly!

LETTER XVIII.

THE ANTHROPOPHAGI.

You would be very vain, my dear friend, if you could, without sinning outrageously against truth, entitle one of your letters thus: "The Anthropophagi!" It exalts a traveller much in his own esteem and in the admiration of his contemporaries, to have seen the spit prepared, upon which it was intended he should be roasted!

Our vestments, under the pretence of honest modesty, only conceal ill-made legs, meagre thighs, and other defects. Women, in particular, make a singular abuse of clothing; far from employing it to conceal their shapes, they employ it to exhibit ostentatiously much more of those shapes than they really possess. Thanks to the falsehoods of our clothes, we scarcely know where to stop; and we have become lovers of clothes, to be enchanted by wool, and passionately enamoured of silk. But it is an advantageous attestation to be able to

establish the fact, that such a nation of epicures has pronounced you fat, plump, and tender—has thought you would make excellent food—and has decided in privy council that you should not be boiled and seasoned with rice, like an old hen; not cooked *en ragoût*, and your flavour heightened with violent, highly seasoned condiments, like insipid, tasteless meat, but be honourably put upon the spit or the gridiron, and be served up *au cresson*, or simply in your own gravy.

I am every day in fear, my dear friend, of receiving a letter from some companion of your travels, which may say:—

"MONSIEUR,

The 12th of August, 1852, the King of the isle of —— having given a grand dinner on the occasion of his nuptials with the Princess ——, of the isle of ——, I have the grief of announcing to you that our unfortunate friend figured in it as the centre dish. If these details can bring any relief to your sorrow, I may say that the savages found him excellent, as we always found him, alas! before this fatal catastrophe, &c. &c."

But there are now scarcely any anthropophagi; men have given over eating one another. They kill one another, it is true, for a yes or a no, in the form of a duel; they kill one another without knowing why, as military men, and under the pretext of glory; they ruin one another, they imprison one another, they deprive one another of bread, air, liberty, &c. From these observations, and a thousand others that could be made, it appears that if they no longer eat each other, it is not from any feeling of charity or neighbourly love, but simply because it is now acknowledged and established that man is a food, more than mediocre, hard to digest, and of a disagreeable flavour.

I have no great reason then, my friends, to fear that you should be on the spit at the time I am writing these lines; if you were, I should grieve, both on your account and that of these unhappy savages, to think that unless you have acquired a little *embonpoint* in your peregrinations, they would make but a bad dinner.

I am at this moment in the midst of a nation of real

anthropophagi, who, on account of their size, are not able to eat up a man at a single repast, but who, nevertheless, feed greedily upon his blood. I am in the midst of them, and remain quietly; I examine them; I study their manners; I sacrifice myself for the instruction of other men!

I speak of a kind of ferocious beast, which flies and pounces down upon man with the velocity of lightning, seizes and fastens upon his naked flesh, and plunges an instrument into him of which this is the agreeable nature. From an *étui*, or case situated on his head, there issue five or six weapons, some dentillated and barbed, others pointed or trenchant. When he has sufficiently scarified our flesh with each of these blades, which are all hollow, he proceeds to suck as much of our blood as his intestines can contain, which he takes care, the while, to free from all that could occupy room or cause inconvenience.

This animal is known under the general name of *gnat*, and it requires a very strong microscope to see and ascertain the forms of its weapons; but if we consider the injury it does us, not relatively to the pain we suffer, but proportionally to its size, relatively to the manner in which it proceeds, to its voracity, which leads it to expose itself to death, without an effort to shun it, when it has once tasted our blood, and until it can contain no more, until it is swelled like a wine skin, and not to be recognised; if we consider also the cruel shape of its weapons, which, in addition, are all poisoned, as is proved by the irritation and tumours which their wounds cause—it must be confessed that we do not know in nature any animal so ferocious and sanguinary.

Reclined upon the grass, and leaning over a part of the rivulet which has overflowed its banks a little upon the turf, and has left a strip of stagnant water, my attention is attracted by some singular little fish; they have something of the shape, and are about the size of a strong pin, of which, with its head, two-thirds of its length have been cut off; or rather they are little fish resembling the dolphins of fable, the dolphins of painters, the dolphins of Arion, but reduced to the size of a large pin's head. They are remarkably vivacious. When in repose, they allow themselves to float on the surface of the water, with their heads downwards, because the con-

duit through which they breathe is placed at the extremity of the tail. If they are the least disturbed, they roll themselves up, swim with the greatest rapidity, dart down, and disappear. They feed, most probably, upon the imperceptible insects which they find in the water, or upon certain parts of earth or slime.

But this is the most important moment of the life of our little dolphins. You may see them change their position; their head is no longer under the water; it floats on the surface, it swells, and its brown skin splits and opens. Then from that split issues a head, soon followed by a body; you recognise the *gnat*, which has accomplished the phases of its first existence, and which is about to enter into a new life. The cast-off dress it has quitted—its ancient skin—becomes for it a little boat which carries it upon the water; for this insect, which but now lived in the water, and would have died at the end of two or three seconds if you had taken it out of it, has now nothing so much to fear as water; it would inevitably perish if it touched it. Then it is placed upright upon its ancient skin, like a rower in his boat. The least breath of air is for it, as you may imagine, a fearful tempest, considering the mortal dangers the water would make it run, and the shallowness of its boat. The boat floats here and there at hazard, whilst it completes its endeavours to extricate itself; then, if it achieves this result without being wetted, it flies away, and carries on its pursuit of man, till the day at which the care for its posterity shall bring it back to the edge of some pool or other stagnant water. There, crouched close upon the verge, it gives to the water little parcels of eggs, which leave the dry ground, and float about upon the surface. At the end of a few days, by an opening in the bottom of the eggs, little dolphins escape, which find themselves thus born in the water, where they are to live till the time of their transformation.

It is that which just now drew that pretty water-wagtail to the bank of the rivulet, that which made her determine to place her nest at the root of the white poplar, where I discovered it. Gnats form the principal food of swallows, and it is probable that they take their migratory flight when there are no more gnats to be found.

In the same strip of water there are some elongated worms, of a beautiful red colour; they pass their lives in making movements so rapid, that they might be pronounced figures of eight. There will come a moment in which they will be metamorphosed into tipulæ—a sort of innocent gnat, which eats nobody, that I know of, but is confounded with gnats in the same penalty and the same food by birds. These transformations are very curious spectacles, and we have only to stoop a little to enjoy them. During the whole summer, from mid-day to four o'clock, we cannot stand over a pool of stagnant water without seeing, in a quarter of an hour, twenty or thirty dolphins restore captive gnats to the sun and air, absolutely just as the whale cast Jonah upon the shore.

Nowithstanding our just cause of complaint against gnats, we must acknowledge that they are prettier insects than they at first appear to be. They have in the fore-part of their heads antennæ, in rich tufts; and their eyes, which in certain aspects look like little emeralds, become, when seen in another light, very sparkling rubies.

I have been stung more than ten times to-day, whilst studying the arms of these anthropophagi, upon which I could now, if I did not pride myself above all things upon being an ignoramus, and preserving the reputation of one, write a special treatise *de armis*.

LETTER XIX.

THE CADDIS—ASPECTS OF DEATH—FLOWING WATER—DRESS—THE LEAF-CUTTER BEE.

At the bottom of the rivulet are little morsels of reeds, little sticks of a few lines in length, which have nothing left but the bark. They are houses, in which the *phryganes*,* sufficiently ugly greyish cocoons, feed upon aquatic herbs, and await the moment of issuing from the water in the form of little butterflies—your pardon, savants!—of little *noctuellæ*, which only fly by night. Previously to this transformation, there comes a moment at which they fall asleep grubs, to awake flies. They know that during the time in which they take no food, they have enemies who have no notion of such abstinence themselves, and to whom, during their sleep, they could oppose no resistance. They know how to spin, and they employ themselves in closing up the two ends of their mansion.

It has often been said, as an example of an invincible argu-

* *Phryganea grandis*, the Caddis-fly.—Ed.

ment, that a door must be either open or shut. Our logicians forget that a door may be left *ajar*. If the phryganea were to close up its dwelling tightly at both ends, it would no longer be in the water; or at least the water, which would be confined with it, being never renewed, would in a short time lose the qualities necessary for supporting life. It spins a little grating at the two extremities of its habitation, and then a cable, which it fastens to some blades of grass upon the bank; this done, it sleeps in tranquillity, awaiting a more happy and a more brilliant life: it falls asleep in the water, to awake in the sunshine and the beautiful blue of the air.

Here, with its roots almost in the water, is a *tussilage*, vulgarly called *colt's foot*, doubtless on account of the form and size of its leaves. Its leaves, which are round and as large as the palm of the hand, will not appear before summer; at present it only shows its blossoms. It is the earliest of aquatic flowers;* it is a marguerite of a brilliant yellow, the rays of which are as fine and slender as hairs. Ancient medicine, with Hippocrates at its head, for a long time attributed to this flower a salutary influence upon the lungs; its name, *tussilage*, implies that it would remove cough. It was by its means that coughs and catarrhal affections were treated, till science, never stopping in its progress, discovered that it produced no effect, either upon the lungs or their diseases, and that it was good for nothing but to adorn the banks of rivulets in the spring—quite a sufficient merit too. Unfortunately, it was not till the end of about a thousand years that science arrived at a conviction upon this point. Nevertheless we still find, in almost all medical laboratories, a large bottle with a red and gold label, upon which is written *Tussilago farfara*. It is but one bottle the more, and forms part of the decoration of the laboratory.

Most doctors—I say most, in order to except justly some whom I love with all my heart—most doctors are like sorcerers, who prefer telling you what is being done at that same moment by the great Mogul in his court, to informing you what it is o'clock by the watch they have in their pockets.

Physicians cure the plague, of which some deny the existence, and which is unknown in our climates—leprosy, which no longer exists but in the East and in books; but they

* In England the colt's foot is commoner on waste clayey or chalky ground than near water.

seldom cure a corn on your toe, and never a cold in the head.

But it appears here as if some gnome were launching arrows which spring from the earth, but are held by their feathered extremity. It is the *Sagittara*, so common on the banks of tranquil waters; the leaves are formed exactly like the iron head of a lance, and are supported by a long, straight, and stiff foot-stalk, which represents the shaft of the arrow. From the bosom of its leaves springs a stalk which bears a spike of white flowers, composed of three rounded petals, the base of which is of reddish-violet colour. The top of the flower is occupied by male blossoms, loaded with yellow stamens, which, with the white and violet of the flower, form a delightful harmony of colours. Underneath are the female blossoms, which have no stamens. The stalks of this plant contain a species of pith of a very agreeable flavour.

A kind of cress with little round shining leaves, grows along the edge of the water, and even into the water; it is ornamented with little flowers of a beautiful dark blue.*

But here is the queen of the meadows.† She does not creep; not she! Amidst the other plants, she proudly raises her head from a rich and tufted foliage, of deep green above, and inclined to white beneath. This stalk bears triumphantly a beautiful thyrsus of charming little white flowers; blooming at the bottom of the thyrsus, they present at the top buds, whose form reminds us of the bud of the orange blossom; its flowers, whose odour is sweet and delicate, mixed with wine, give it the aroma of Malmsey wine, which renders one doubtful as to the following fact:—

It is known that a duke of Clarence, brother of a king of England, when condemned to death, as an only favour, requested to be drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine. There are moments in a man's life in which he desires death. It is the dying only that is disagreeable; the aspect of death, therefore, changes much, according to circumstances.

Death is not that great invariable skeleton which is generally presented to us; it has all sorts of forms and figures, and in the number there are many that seem much less disagreeable than others.

Contemplate it in war. It is accompanied by the noise of

* *Veronica Beccabunga.* † *Spiræa Ulmaria.*

trumpets and drums, surrounded by smoke and the stupifying smell of powder. Glorious and noble, promising honours, ribbons, rank, with the sweet rewards of love and admiration, it invites you to follow it, and intoxicated man throws himself willingly into its arms.

Contemplate it in a bed. The wretched being who awaits it does not breathe the exciting odour of powder, but the debilitating odour of drugs and plasters. He dies in detail; he dies weak, fearful, idiotical, clinging with all his soul to life, and with his nails to the clothes and curtains of his bed, and to the sheets which will serve for his shroud.

Who can assure us that the wine in which Clarence died was true Malmsey wine? Certainly, the man who had chosen this sort of death, must have felt a last and a bitter pang, if he perceived, at the critical moment, that he had been deceived in the quality of the wine contained in the butt which was to be his coffin.

Certain little round insects with hard wings, like those of beetles, are amusing themselves on the water in a singular fashion: they form circles with a rapidity that fatigues the eye. This must be a movement that has its charms, since they are not the only people who make a practice of it; but it is a religious ceremony. The insect is called *whirligig**—the priests are styled *dervishes*.

Another, larger and of an elliptic shape, is an hydrophilus; it has six feet, the hinder ones of which are formed like oars, and permit it to come to the surface of the water, from which it takes flight, and to descend to the bottom, where it finds its subsistence. It lays its eggs in a silken bag, which it fastens to the under part of the leaf of an aquatic plant, which it closes when they are laid. The larva, that is to say, the insect, which bears a different form, and which will, at a later period, become a hydrophilus, comes out of the water when it is born, goes to bury itself in the earth, a little above the water, in a hole, from which it will come out at a future time a perfect hydrophilus.

When I was speaking about the cress, I forgot to name a circumstance which, perhaps, you would never guess; it is that, with botanists, the cress of the fountain, which grows in

* *Gyrinus natator.*—Ed.

the water, which they call *Sisymbrium nasturtium*, and the yellow gillyflower, which grows on old walls, are, excepting in some very trifling details, one and the same thing: the description they give of the two plants is almost identical.

There is an indefinable charm in the aspect and the noise of waters. There are people who pretend to be serious, because they go through their follies with a frowning air, and in clothes of certain colours,—who pretend exclusively to be grave, because their childishnesses only cause others to laugh. These people consider it a sign of idiocy to look at and watch flowing water. I here declare that it is an occupation that has a singular attraction for me, and is one of those to which I abandon myself with the greatest ardour. Flowing water is at once a picture and a music, which causes to flow at the same time from my brain, like a limpid and murmuring rivulet, sweet thoughts, charming reveries, and melancholy remembrances.

There are not so many watchers of flowing waters as is generally imagined. Such a one passes an hour with his elbow on the parapet of a bridge, and watches an angler, looks at the horses which draw a barge, or both looks at and listens to the pretty washing-maidens singing. But to recline, buried in deep grass in bloom, under the blue-leafed willows, follow with the eye a river or a rivulet, look at the reeds it bends in its course, and the grass it bears away with it, the green dragon-flies which alight upon the rosy blossoms of the flowering reed,* or on the white or violet flowers of the sagittarius, or on the little white anemones, blooming over a large carpet of verdure,—verdure like the green hair of a naiad,—*and to see nothing but that;* to listen to the brushing of their gauze wings, and the murmuring of the water against the banks, and the noise of a breathing of wind among the leaves of the willows, *and hear nothing but that;* to forget everything else, to feel one's heart filled with unspeakable joy, to feel one's soul expand and blossom in the sun, like the little blue flowers of the forget-me-not and the rosy blossoms of the flowering reed; to be sensible of no desire and of no fear but that of seeing a large white cloud, which is rolling up from the horizon, ascend in the heavens and conceal the sun for a time;—that is what I call looking at flowing water,

* *Butomus umbellatus.*

—that is not a pleasure, it is a happiness, which I reckon among the greatest that it has been given to me to taste in the course of my life.

I spoke to you just now of the washing-maidens, who sing as they prosecute their classical occupation, without a thought, I dare say, of Homer, on the banks of rivers. I heard one—ay, and a pretty one too—sing the following song, which I shall never forget:—

" Les hommes sont trompeurs,
La chose est bien certaine;
Sont-ils auprès de vous:
Mademoiselle, je vous aime!

" Sont-ils auprès de vous,
Mademoiselle, je vous aime!
En sont-ils éloignés,
Ne disent plus de même.

" En sont-ils éloignés,
Ne disent plus de même.
Rencontrent-ils leurs amis:
Connais-tu Mamzelle telle?

" Rencontrent-ils leurs amis:
Connais-tu Mamzelle telle?
Elle croit, de bonne foi,
Que je suis amoureux d'elle.

" Elle croit, de bonne foi,
Que je suis amoureux d'elle.
Pour lui fair' voir que non,
J' fais l'amour près d' chez elle.

" Pour lui fair' voir que non,
J' fais l'amour près d' chez elle.
Cherchez un autre amant,
J'ai une autre maitresse.

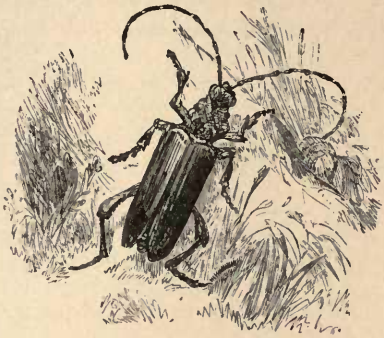
" Cherchez un autre amant,
J'ai une autre maitresse."
" —Je n'en chercherai pas,
J'en ai à la douzaine.

" Je n'en chercherai pas,
J'en ai à la douzaine.
Et de ce que j'aimais,
Vous faisiez le treizième."

As I was seated beneath a large ash, a musk-beetle* fell from it; and, in spite of its odour, which, without being extremely bad, is insupportable on account of its strength, I held it some time in my hand to admire the brilliant green colour, shot with gold, in which it is clothed. Many

* *Cerambyx moschatus.*—Ed.

insects owe their magnificence to their wings alone,—the musk-beetle is all over of the same colour and the same splendour.



THE MUSK-BEETLE.

This reminds me of the adornments of which men are often so proud, and which both sexes so laboriously employ to please and seduce each other. I can easily understand that an insect, which glitters in the sun with the richest colours, should be proud of its dress,—I could pardon the bird, which in the morning shakes itself in the earliest ray of the dawn, and, on finding itself richly clothed, should be a little vain of its plumage,—because the wings of the butterfly and the feathers of the bird belong to them, and are parts of them; but is there anything that ought to render them more humble than the toilette of a man or a woman? Is it not, in the first place, a melancholy admission, that our body is a carcase which we can only embellish by concealing it, an object for which we employ means the most violent and extraordinary? That ring, now,—that ring of gold, set off by a large pearl, worth, perhaps, a thousand crowns,—has been dug from the bowels of the earth, and raked from the abyss of the sea! and its only object is to conceal a very small part of the hand, which appears to you less beautiful than a little metal and the secretion of an oyster; for women who are quite satisfied with their hands never wear rings.

And all the rest of your dress is composed of the cast-off

apparel of animals which browse in the meadows, or of insects that crawl beneath your feet; there is scarcely one from which you do not borrow a portion of its covering. Your grandest and most splendid attire is composed of the shreds you steal from one or another, from sheep and from silk-worms.

Observe that woman now passing: yesterday she was mild and good, to-day you see she is haughty and insolent. What has created this change in her? Nothing, only she has upon her head a feather plucked from the tail of an ostrich! How proud that ostrich ought to be, which has so many more, and all its own!

But it will be even worse to-morrow, when she will envelop herself in a shawl made of the hair of certain goats from Thibet—goats which I have seen, and which really do not appear anything like so proud of this hair as the ladies are who borrow it of them.

And that robe, the great value of which produces such disdainful glances from other women, is nothing but the web in which a large worm, called a silk-worm, enveloped itself—a web which it abandoned with disdain as soon as it had become a white and plain moth!

It is a singular thing to associate this humility, which leads man to conceal his real figure, and adorn himself with the superfluities of insects and animals, with the superiority which he attributes to himself over all nature. It must be further confessed, that a man who should unite in himself the faculties of certain insects,—who could, like the hydrophilus, fly in the air, and plunge to the depths of the waters,—would only have to pass for a god among other men, by not opposing himself too strongly to the natural servility which is the portion of most men, even of those who talk most loudly about liberty and independence. Read history: a tyrant has never been overthrown, but for the benefit, more or less immediate, of another tyrant. To-day, when we pride ourselves upon no longer saluting a king, we unharness the horses of dancers, singers, and courtesans—harness ourselves in their places—and take a pride in dragging their carriage in triumph!

We were speaking of insects splendidly clothed. Follow with

your eye that which has just lighted on a red poppy: it is not richly dressed—yellow and brown are the colours of its costume; but it is in possession of another luxury well worth the luxury of clothes. In the middle of a walk there is a little hole, of the size of the quill of a pen; that is the entrance to the house which that sort of bee makes itself in the earth, by carrying the soil away from its little cavern, grain by grain. It is not chance that leads it to the poppy; it is about to cut a sheet of crimson tapestry, with which to decorate its home. See, it has cut with its teeth, from the edge of one of the petals of the flower, a little piece, which forms very regularly the half of an oval; it seizes the piece, folds it in its claws, and bears it away to its abode. The entrance is narrow, and nearly three inches deep. The piece of red satin is a little ragged, but it applies it to the partition, and stretches it properly: it will require twenty pieces to cover the chamber. But you will pardon this luxury when I tell you that that apartment, so richly hung, is the cradle of the child it will soon bring into the world. The tapestry is fitted, and it sets out again. It is not sufficient that the future inhabitant of the pretty cell should be well lodged; it must have abundance of food provided, for its mother will not be able to bring it any: she will be dead before the egg from which it is to issue shall be hatched. It brings in its feet the dust of the stamens of flowers, which it mingles with honey, and of which it makes a little heap. Then, and not until then, it lays a little egg near the heap, from which, at a later period, will issue a worm destined to become a bee. But this is not all: if the house were left open, some ichneumon might come as an enemy, or ants might devour the honey. The bee then takes down the hangings of the peristyle of her house,—that is to say, the little quill-shaped conduit which leads to the apartment, and which, like the rest, was covered with poppy-leaves; it then pushes this part of the tapestry to the entrance of the chamber, after which it fills the passage with earth so completely, that it is almost impossible to discover any trace of it.

Let us return to the banks of my rivulet, from which this little bee has lured us. Here is a shrub whose branches are of a beautiful yellow; it is the willow, whose young branches

are known by the name of *osiers*. These flowers attract a great number of bees.

A vast deal is said of willows by the ancients.

The Psalmist relates that the Israelite slaves suspended their musical instruments from the willows of Babylon. Virgil describes Galatea hiding herself behind the willows:

> "Malo me Galatea petit, lasciva puella,
> Et fugit ad salices et se cupit ante videri."

He speaks in a hundred places of the *bitter willows* upon which the goats browse, and of the willows of a blue green, which bees are fond of.

The satined white stem of the birch shoots up without knots to a great height, and gives to the wind, upon branches of extreme delicacy, its light foliage which trembles at the least breath. It was the birch that had the honour of supplying our ancient universities with rods. The Finlanders substitute the leaves of birch for those of the tea-plant; the Swedes extract a syrup from the sap, of which they make a spirituous liquor. In London, they make champagne of it. The most virtuous uses to which it is applied, are brooms and wooden shoes.

Pliny speaks of the birch and of the rods:

> "Betula, terribilis magistratuum virgis."

The dwarf-elder spreads in the sun, at about three feet from the ground, its rich umbels of white flowers, each umbel as large as my two hands; its black berries are full of a violet-coloured juice, with which, according to Virgil, the god Pan had his face smeared, in compliance with a whimsical custom of the ancient Romans, who painted their gods on solemn occasions.

And here my rivulet disappears under the grass, under the yellow-blossomed Iris, under a crowd of aquatic plants and trees, which love coolness and moisture. It is necessary to make the tour of a group of trees, if we wish to meet with it again at the spot where it throws itself into a sort of large pool, surrounded by willows, reeds, and Iris.

LETTER XX.

FLOWERS, AND THEIR MEMORIES.

A TOUCHING sentiment has consecrated certain plants and certain trees to those who have departed this life: the cypress, which elevates its black foliage like a pyramid; the weeping willow, which envelopes a tomb with its pendent branches; the honeysuckle, which grows in cemeteries more beautifully and vigorously than elsewhere, and which spreads a sweet odour, that seems to be the soul of the dead exhaling and ascending to heaven; the periwinkle, with its dark green foliage and blossoms of lapis blue, so fresh and so charm-

ing, and which the peasantry call *the violet of the dead.* But there are other flowers which associate themselves with certain joys, and certain dead griefs likewise; for forgetfulness is the death of things which no longer live but in the heart.

These flowers return every year, at a fixed period, like anniversaries, to repeat to me many recitals of the past, of perished trust and dead hope, of which nothing more remains than that which remains of the beloved dead—a tender sadness, and a melancholy which softens the heart.

These ideas come back to me on seeing these forget-me-nots, these pretty little blue flowers, creeping almost into the water.

Perhaps to all the world but me this large lime-tree is a magnificent tent of transparent green; you see birds hop about in its branches, and butterflies, which love silence and shade, flirt among the leaves like nymphs and fauns, and you inhale the sweet odour of its flowers. But for me, it seems that the wind which agitates these leaves, repeats to me all the things I have said and heard at the foot of another lime-tree, in far bygone times; the shade of the leaves of the tree, and the rays of the sun which they break, form for me images which I can only see there; that odour intoxicates me, troubles my reason, and plunges me into ecstasies and visions. The Pythoness of old saw the future at the moment of inspiration; *I* behold the past again, but not as past; I tread over again every one of the steps I have made in life, everything lives again for me, with the colours of the vestments, the words that were spoken and the sound of the voice. I do not forget the least circumstance of a single instant; by recalling a word, I see again a thousand details which I did not know I had remarked; I behold the folds of her robe and the reflection of her hair; I see how the sun and the shade played upon her countenance, and what flowers blossomed in the grass, and what odours were exhaled in the air, and what distant noise was heard; I see, I breathe, I hear all this!

If my eyes fall upon one of those *ravenelles*, of those gilly-flowers which blossom on the walls, if I breathe its balsamic perfume, I become the prey of an enchantment. I am twenty years old; I find myself no longer in this garden; I ascend a flight of stone steps, green with moss, in the crevices of

which blossom gillyflowers, and my heart beats as if I were about to find *her* in the garden. That convolvulus, those beautiful violets, white, rose-coloured, streaked bells, which climb up trees and shrubs, tell me on what day it was we sowed some of its seeds together, and at what hour of the day, and what was the form at that instant of the white clouds in the blue heavens, and how, on rising up, as we had stooped to put the seeds in the ground, our hair touched; and my hair again seems to communicate an electric shock to my heart. And, afterwards, how both arose early to see *our* convolvulus, whose flowers close and fade as soon as they are touched by the sun. I still know which of the plants bloomed first; it was a large bell of a beautiful dark blue, passing to violet by insensible gradations as the eye approached the bottom of the flower, which was white. There were some white ones, divided by a rose-coloured, faint blue, or violet cross; others of a pale rose, with a deeper-coloured cross; some striped with white, rose, and violet.

And the large Passe-Roses, with their noble and majestic port, like that of Italian poplars. There were lime-trees in the garden, a tuft of yellow blossoms always filled with bees, black and orange drones, and large black flies with violet wings. It appears to me when I here see the yellow Passe-Roses, and black flies with violet wings, and bees, and brown and orange drones, it appears to me that these things, like those of another time, draw other circumstances after them, like the beads of a rosary.

Blossom, blossom! graceful monuments which I have raised to my beloved dead, to all that I have believed, to all that I have loved, to all that I have hoped, to all that which like thee has blossomed in my heart, to all that has faded, but for ever, whilst every summer ye return with your beauty, your youth, and your perfume!

LETTER XXI.

MUSIC—DRAGON-FLIES—THE WATER-LILY AND THE VALLISNERIA.

THE alders, willows of different sorts, and poplars of three or four kinds, separate us from a little road, which leads to a pool, surrounded by reeds and rushes. There, through the cool, limpid water, we can plainly discern the shining pebbles, the sand, and the fish.

There is a vast distance between the *reed*, one of the first musical instruments of the ancients, and the piano, the flute, the bassoon, the harp, and the violin; and yet it is to be observed that the miracles of music are to be referred to the

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period at which great musicians piped on straws or reeds, or struck three chords stretched over the shell of a tortoise.

> "Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avenâ."
> "Orpheus viduos sonorâ solabatur testudine amores."

Music then was able to appease the fury of wild beasts, to persuade stones to collect themselves into a wall, and cleave solidly to one another, and, when breathed through a flute, to lull Argus himself to sleep.

Now-a-days, when so many instruments have been invented and perfected,—now-a-days, when not only the musicians of past ages are despised, but even, and particularly, those of yesterday,—now-a-days, so far from building cities, appeasing lions, or saddling dolphins, men are with great difficulty brought together to listen to music at all. At the opera now, to induce people to be present, whilst some instruments are blown through, and others beaten upon, it is found necessary to exhibit to them objects of every description to attract the eye, because they know that many men come rather to see dancers than to hear music. All sorts of means must be had recourse to, all kinds of falsehoods invented, to persuade people that all the world goes there: without that delusion, no one would go at all.

Are you aware how many degradations the poor fellows who give concerts are reduced to, in order to persuade people to give them a few shillings, under the pretence of hearing pieces which they hear sixty times over every winter? Do you know what sad baits they must lay, what humiliations they must endure, what follies they must submit to?

Midas preferred the flute of Marsyas to the lyre of Apollo. The flute of Marsyas was composed of seven oaten straws, or reeds; the lyre of Apollo was a tortoise-shell, over which three strings were stretched. Apollo was angry, and he was less in the wrong than angry people generally are. In fact, the two instruments must have been equally tiresome to listen to—perfectly insupportable; there was no choice to make, and the sentence of superiority of the oaten straws over the tortoise-shell, pronounced by King Midas, must have arisen from malice.

Apollo acted then exactly as many pianists would do. if they dared;—he skinned his rival, and crowned his judge with ass's ears.

King Midas concealed his ears as well as he was able, but he was obliged to confide the secret to his barber, who, being unable to keep it, dug a hole in the earth, and when the secret was choking him, he went and relieved his throat by putting his head into the hole, and saying: "Midas—King Midas has ass's ears." Some reeds grew in this hole, and when they were agitated by the wind, instead of simply murmuring, as others do, and as honest reeds ought to do, they said: "Midas—King Midas has ass's ears."

The reed (*calamus*) was the first pen invented. Of reeds, arrows and canes were made :—

"Lethalis arundo."—VIRG.
"Equitare in arundine longa."—HOR.

A sort of grub, of a greenish grey colour, crawls out of the mud, leaves the water at the bottom of which it has hitherto lived, and fastens itself to a small reed; it then sticks into the bark of the reed two little very sharp claws which it has on each foot. After a few minutes of immobility, you may perceive its eyes become brilliant, and its back split and open; then a head appears through the opening; after this head come the body and wings of a *libellule*, or *demoiselle*. The wings are folded and shapeless; the body is soft, and all in a heap. It waits till the air without, and life within, may put all in proper condition; at the end of half-an-hour, it shakes itself, and flies away, light, slender, and richly adorned with the colours of the emerald and the turquoise, and at least as brilliant as either.

I now see a crowd of them sporting in the air, or lighted upon the reeds; some of them dart away, and disappear on the wing, but return a few minutes afterwards. They live on prey, and devour the insects of the air, as they ate those of the water, when in their first shape.

Among all insects, in these, perhaps, there is the least resemblance between the males and females. Contrary to what is observed in all other insects, the male is at first much larger than the female, and their vestments are quite different.

I can see some which are big; they are striped with yellow and green-tinted black. Their males are generally of a slate-colour; some few males, however, are yellow as well as the females. Some are of a dark and shining blue, with black spots at the extremities of the wings; their females are of a beautiful golden green.

Their manner of making love is singular for insects, although by no means uncommon with men. It is by perseverance, and the annoyance they cause by an almost hostile assiduity, that the males succeed in seducing the beauty that has won their hearts, generally from the middle of September till the middle of October. We shall not be long before we see an example, for there is a green and gold female just alighted on a rose-flowered reed. She glitters coquettishly in the sun: a blue male perceives her; he rushes towards her, seizes her by the throat, and carries her off through the air, and will not let her go till she has consented to crown his flame.

The waters and their banks have their trees, their flowers, and their butterflies; the last of which are these libellules. There is another kind of libellule, or demoiselle, which, to you or me, singularly resembles that we have just been looking at, but between which naturalists discover great differences. We shall not meet with them here: they have not lived under water, as the others have done; on the contrary, it was in the sand, and beneath the most ardent sun, that they went through their first state. It is more than probable we may fall in with them in the course of our journey.

Upon the surface of the water are spread some large round and shining leaves, of a sombre green colour; upon these leaves bloom beautiful double white roses. It is the water-lily of our ponds. As long as there is any cold to be dreaded, it keeps its leaves rolled up under the water; but as soon as fine weather seems certain, it elongates the stalks of its leaves, and they rise and spread themselves upon the surface of the water; the flowers soon spring from the water as buds, and then blow: at night they close their petals, and resume the form of buds. When the flower is fecundated, it no longer requires either air or sun; it again descends beneath the

surface, and does not rise again. It is there the fruit is formed and ripened, and the seed it contains will be sown in the earth at the bottom of the pool.

In another corner is the yellow-blossomed water-lily, whose flower is simple, but whose habits are exactly the same as the other.

There is another plant which lives equally in the waters, but which is not to be found in our gardens; it is the *vallisneria.* It has not, as the water-lily, the male and female united in the same corolla; they are upon two different flowers, as we have already seen in the case with some other plants; but here the separation appears more cruel and more invincible. The female flowers are placed upon a long spiral footstalk, by means of which they bloom on the surface, like those of the water-lily; whilst the male flowers are retained

VALLISNERIA SPIRALIS.

at the bottom, and at a great depth, by a very short stalk. But at the proper season, the male flower detaches itself, ascends in a state of freedom to the surface, lavishes his caresses, and is carried away by the current. The female flower then returns under water, to mature and sow its seed.

Here the *aponogeton distachion,* a white flower, with black stamens, exhales a sweet odour of vanilla from its corolla, which resembles a shell; whilst the *menyanthes,* which lives

near it, appears to be made of white feathers; and the *pontederia cordata* lifts its large leaves and blue flowers high out of the water.

Let us leave for a moment the edge of my pool, to go and seek in another corner of the garden the *cyclamen*, which has for its seed, cases analogous to those of the water-lily and the *vallisneria*. Its root is a large shapeless tubercle, from which first issue the leaves, which are of the consistency and somewhat of the shape of those of certain ivies, but are agreeably streaked with white and clear green. These leaves form a circle in several rows, leaving in the middle of them a round space where the earth is bare; from this space, at a later period, rise buds of flowers upon peduncules, rolled spirally in the form of a corkscrew, which unbend gradually, and bear, at an elevation of some inches, white or purplish flowers, the centre of which is inclined towards the ground, and the under extremity of the petals pointing upwards. When the flower is withered, when the petals are dry, there remains nothing but an ovary enlarged by fecundation, and a little capsule of reddish green, which contains the seed. The cyclamen has not the same confidence in the air that other plants have; it contracts its spiral again, and brings back its capsule under the ground, where its seeds will ripen and be ready sown.

In a very different manner we have seen the scorsoneras and the dandelions give to the winds their seeds crowned with an aigrette in the form of a feather, Most plants allow their seeds to fall at their feet. The balsam launches its seed to a distance. You know the balsam, with its beautiful flowers, red, white, flesh-colour, violet, streaked with white and violet, or white and red; when its seeds are ripe, it splits the capsule which contains them, and launches them to a distance of several feet; they thus frequently escape the hands of the gardener who wishes to preserve them.

LETTER XXII.

MEMORIES OF THE DEAD.

We now arrive at a group of old elms surrounded by ivy, which, meeting at their tops, form a lofty vaulted canopy, and "forbid the sun to enter." Under this thick shade, however, syringas and honeysuckles flourish; syringas, whose white blossoms partake of the odour of those of the orange; the honeysuckle has taken possession of such of the trees as have been forgotten by the ivy, and springs up with astonishingly rapid growth, sending forth in all directions flowers exhaling one of the sweetest perfumes. The honeysuckle is a plant that seems to devote itself to the tomb, the most magnificent of them being found in cemeteries. We all know the effect produced upon the imagination, if not upon the mind, by the burning of incense in churches, whilst the organ fills the vault of the temple with its powerful voice; but there is something more religious, more powerful, more solemn, than the harmonious voices of the choristers, or the swelling

peal of the organ:—it is the silence of the tombs. There is a perfume more exciting, more religious even than that of incense; it is that of the honeysuckles which grow over tombs upon which grass has sprung up thick and tufted with them, as quickly as forgetfulness has taken possession of the hearts of the survivors.

In an evening, when the sun has set,—when, alone in a cemetery, we begin to shiver at the sound of our own steps,—when we breathe this odour of the honeysuckle, it appears that whilst the body is transformed, and become the flowers which cover the tomb, the blue periwinkle (the violet of the dead) and the honeysuckle, it seems as if the immortal soul was escaping, exhaling in celestial perfume, and ascending above the clouds.

Many poets have spoken of the worms which devour the dead. This is a horrible image, particularly horrible for those who have consigned to the earth the remains of beloved objects. This worm of the tomb has been invented by these poets, and exists nowhere but in their imaginations; the bodies of those we have loved are not exposed to this insult, this profanation. Learned men—that is to say, really learned and scientific men—will tell you that it is not true that corruption engenders worms; certain flies must have laid eggs from which such worms could issue, and these flies have not the power of penetrating into the earth below a certain depth.

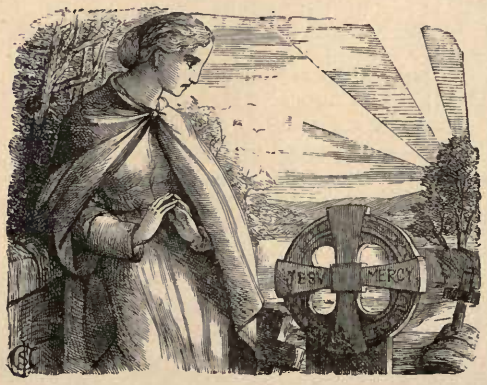
Life is much changed since the day on which we have deposited in the earth the body of a fondly-loved person. How many things disturb you of which you had not even dreamed! It is an image that does not remain with you at all times, but which arises before you all at once, at the most unexpected moments, and which comes to freeze you in the midst of pleasure or of festivity, which checks and dissipates a smile which was about to play upon your lips. Nothing more is required to evoke it, and make it appear, than a word which was familiar to the dead, than a sound, than a voice, than an air sung at a distance, and of which the wind brings you a faint note or two;—nothing more is required than the sight or the odour of a flower, instantly to revive before you that sad yet cherished image, and, as with a freshly sharpened

weapon, inflict upon your heart anew the pangs of the *adieux* and the eternal separation.

From that day, there is a portion of ourselves in the tomb; from that day, we only give ourselves up to the world and its distractions by escaping from ourselves, at the risk of being at every instant reseized, and brought back to the cemetery. In short, we have buried in their tomb all we once loved with them; flowers cultivated with them, airs sung together, griefs endured together, pleasures enjoyed together,—all things which recal the dead, and speak to you of them.

I had in a solitary corner of my garden three hyacinths, which my father had planted, and which death did not allow him to see bloom. Every year, the period of their flowering was for me a solemnity, a funereal and religious festival; it was a melancholy remembrance, which revived and reblossomed every year, and exhaled certain thoughts with its perfume. The roots are dead now, and nothing lives of this dear association but in my own heart.

But what a dear, yet sad, privilege man possesses above all created beings, in being thus able, by memory and thought, to follow those whom he has loved to the tomb, and there shut himself up living with the dead! What a melancholy privilege! And yet where is there one among us who would lose it? Who is he who would willingly forget all?



LETTER XXIII.

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN—AMATEURS OF FLOWERS—THE PEONY.

THERE is a little bird flitting about under the great elms, which is most likely to place its nest in some angle of a wall, where we shall easily find it: that is a *wren*, the *regulus cristatus;* not the same as the one that dwells in a corner of my old house. The other is called *troglodytes parvulus*, or wren.

This one, which, like the other, could escape through the wires of a cage without rumpling its feathers, is of an olive cast; but the male bears on his head a little tuft of a brilliant gold: the tuft on the head of the female is of a citron colour. Their nest is lined with moss, spiders' webs, and the down which covers the seeds of certain plants. The hen lays six eggs in it, white, tinged with rose-colour, and about as large as peas.

But what sweet and enchanting melody appears to flow from the sharply pointed leaves of that bushy holly! A little linnet, with its brown head, is there sitting upon its five reddish eggs, spotted with chestnut, in a nest of grass and hair, which she has placed upon one of the lowest branches. Upon a bough, a little more elevated, sits her mate, whose head is black, singing, to divert her during the tediousness of incubation. He only breaks off in his song to go and seek

insects, which he brings to her upon the nest. I will not go near it: the linnet has not so much confidence in man as the wren has; it would abandon its nest and its eggs, if it saw me many times prowling about near the holly.

Here and there flit butterflies, shaded with fawn-colour, and a yellow like withered leaves; these are *sylphs* and *fauns*, which seldom leave the shade.

In the hollows of oaks, the great stag-beetle, the rhinoceros, and other beetles, await the hour of evening to leave their solitude, and buzz about the world.

A large black butterfly, with a border of a beautiful yellow at the outward edge of its wings, rises to the very tops of the trees. That is the *morio.**

Here is another, which attracts attention by its size, and by its magnificent colour of carmine, striped with black. In order to see it nearer, you pursue it, and attempt to catch it; but it escapes, and you lose sight of it. You believe it has flown to a distance, as the splendour of its costume would betray it if it were near; but you are deceived—there it is, close to you, on the trunk of a birch. It is only its under wings that are so splendid; when it is pursued, it conceals them under the upper ones, which are grey, and are easily confounded with the bark of the trees upon which it loves to settle.

In the grass, and under the thickest shade, primroses, some pale violets, and the lily of the valley, blossom. The flower of the last has the shape and beauty of a pearl, but of a perfumed pearl.

Many women prefer lilies of the valley to pearls, but all would prefer having pearls given to them; very few of them are influenced by avarice in this preference. Women are, I repeat, like the gods, who were most flattered when fat heifers were sacrificed to them, or when offerings were made to them of massive gold: they did not eat the heifers—they had no need of the gold; but these more valuable presents manifested, on the part of those who offered them, a greater and proportionate veneration.

The cuckoo-pint blossoms likewise in the shade, with its green horn, followed by a spike of scarlet fruit; and the wood anemone is a pretty white flower, tinged with violet. This is

* *Vanessa Antiopa.* The Camberwell beauty.

the original of an anemone which we shall find in another part of the garden; there, its foliage forms a beautiful rich green turf, from which spring simple rose-shaped anemones, red, scarlet, purple, blue, violet, white,—or streaked with all these various colours. A bed of these is one of the richest and most magnificent sights imaginable. The anemone is one of the plants called *florists' flowers.*

There are people, sober in their pleasures, who concentrate their cares upon a single flower. There are amateurs of tulips; for them there is no other flower in the world but tulips—other flowers are weeds; and still further, among tulips, there is only the tulip with the white ground, and among tulips with the white ground, there is only the tulip with the rounded petals. The year begins for them on the 15th of May, and finishes on the 28th of the same month. There are amateurs of roses, there are amateurs of auriculas, there are amateurs of pinks, there are amateurs of dahlias, there are amateurs of camellias, there are amateurs of ranunculuses, there are amateurs of anemones: these are the only *flowers*—others are called *bouquets;* and you should see with what a tone and manner they pronounce the word bouquet! So with sportsmen, there are some animals that are *game,* and others that are not. Of all this race, the amateurs of tulips are the most ferocious; not that the others, however, are remarkably mild, or that I advise any one to approach them without due precaution. It sometimes happens that the amateurs of anemones cultivate ranunculuses simultaneously, but they expose themselves to being treated as fleurichons, or dabblers, by the more severe amateurs.

I knew a tulip-fancier, who, at the season for planting his tulips, made every year two composts: one of maiden earth, sand, and leaf mould; the other of clay, pigeons' dung, and animal mould. In the first, which is favourable to tulips, he planted his own roots; in the other, which combined all the contrary conditions, he placed such as he had received as presents, or in exchange. If he thinks his cares insufficient, he waters them with soap-suds. Then, at the period of their blooming, after having made you admire his own plants, he leads you to the others, and tells you, in a delightfully self-sufficient tone—"These are plants which distin-

guished amateurs have been kind enough to offer me in exchange for mine!"

To return to anemones,—they were brought into France from the East Indies, more than two centuries ago, by a Monsieur Bachelier, who was ten years before he would give a single one to anybody. A magistrate went to see him in his robes, and purposely making their folds drag over the anemones in seed, contrived to carry away a few of them, which adhered to the wool of his robe.

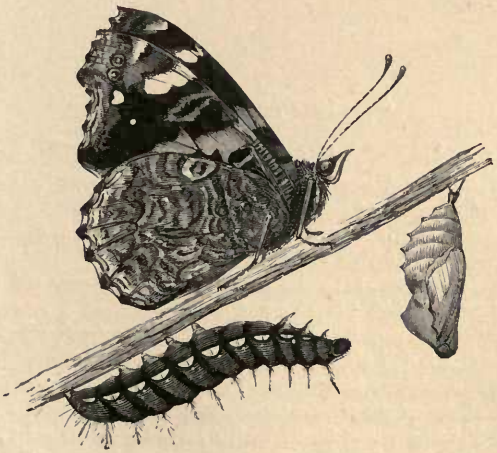
Never speak to an amateur of anemones, of anything else but his anemones; if you say to him: "I have a beautiful pink," he will ask you what sort of an anemone that is? But do not imagine that the amateurs of flowers love flowers better than the learned do: the learned do not acknowledge the cultivated anemone, they say that it is a monster, or they dry it, paste it on paper, and write barbarous words under it. Amateurs content themselves with requiring difficult conditions of anemones; thus there is a sort of green calyx, which ought to be placed just at one-third from the flower, and two-thirds from the earth, and without this the anemoue may display the richest colours in vain—it will be dismissed from the bed, and declared nothing but *bouquet!* I spare you a dozen more or less singular conditions which are required of these poor flowers.

Here is a peony, a sort of gigantic rose, of the most beautiful red. There are no amateurs of peonies, unless it be the tree-peony, because that is perhaps less beautiful, more difficult to cultivate, but more scarce. The ordinary peony, red, rose-coloured or white, is held in no esteem.

But it is so common! Thanks, O Lord, for all that thou has created common! thanks for the blue heavens, the sun, the stars, murmuring waters, and the shade of embowering oaks,—thanks for the corn-flowers of the fields and the gilly-flowers of the walls,—thanks for the songs of the linnet and the hymns of the nightingale,—thanks for the perfumes of the air and the sighing of the winds among the trees,—thanks for the magnificent clouds gilded by the sun at its setting and rising,—thanks for love, the most common sentiment of all,—thanks for all the beautiful things thy stupendous bounty has made common!

The peony was formerly, however, much celebrated: it drove away tempests, broke enchantments, defeated witchcraft, and now and then cured epilepsy. Its name, pœonia, came from Pœon, a celebrated physician, who employed it to cure Pluto, when wounded by Hercules. The root of the peony, therefore, was not taken lightly; it was at a certain hour of the night, and during a certain phase of the moon; and still further, it was necessary to take care not to be observed by the woodpecker, whilst digging it; whoever was observed by the woodpecker became blind.

The peony is no longer anything but a beautiful and splendid flower, despised by amateurs, and seldom seen but in poor gardens.



LETTER XXIV.

THE POOR TRAVELLERS—THE CASTLE OF CHILLON.

You must not imagine, my friend, that I also have never travelled; there has been a time when I wrote, in a few words, every evening, the result of my impressions of the day. Here are some lines of this Journal.

"LILLE.—I went to the midnight mass; some old women were praying and preparing a supper called a *reveillon* or *medianoche;* from time to time they drew from under their petticoats a small chafing-dish, upon which were cooking two or three herrings; they turned the herrings, put the chafing-dish back in *its place*, and resumed their prayers.

"In Picardy I was treated with tarts made of leeks; which would be horrible, if it were possible to eat them.

"LAUSANNE.—I have been angling here in the Lake of Geneva; but I have caught no fish; a circumstance that has happened to me in the various rivers, lakes, and streams, in which I have made a similar experiment. But, here I am in Switzerland, though.

"When I used to say: 'There is a beautiful tree, a limpid stream, a fine sheet of snow, or a lovely greensward,' I was silenced with: 'Bah, you have not been in Switzerland!' —'No.'—'Then never say anything about greensward, snow, limpid waters, trees, or anything else in the world.'

"One day I set out for Switzerland, not so much for the sake of seeing Switzerland, as to be able to say I had been there, and to be allowed to speak when I pleased, about trees, grass, water, and snow.

"I set out, then, but my dislike for travelling accompanied me, and exposed me to singular accidents. I had money and time for three weeks, and I discovered, one evening, that I had been fishing eight days for mullets in the little lake of Mantua, believing myself to be in Switzerland; it was very beautiful, though. I loved that half-circular mountain, crowned with snow; below the snow, firs with their black foliage; below the firs, fine poplars edged the water, and cast over it the reflection of their lofty tops.

"One day, as I was looking at the travellers who were stopped at the douane, I found out that I was still in France, and, therefore, immediately passed the frontier. I arrived at Geneva, but whilst travelling thither, I experienced a regret and a remorse, of which the following was the subject:—

"Whilst I was on board the boat which conveyed me by the Saône from Châlons to Lyons, my attention was very much taken up by a woman accompanied by two children; the first was about twelve years of age, she held the second in her arms. There was in the appearance of this woman a mixture of distinction and misfortune which affected me to the highest degree. Her costume was not a travelling costume, but a heterogeneous composition of divers pieces of divers toilettes. All was faded, and the more sad from its being plainly to be seen that it had once been rich and elegant. She had a green bonnet, but faded, with torn flowers; a tartan mantle of red and black check; a torn glove on one hand, the other, uncovered, was white and handsome, her fingers slender, her nails very nice, but not one ring, not even a wedding-ring—it was the left hand that was uncovered. I have been poor, and I have preserved a wonderful tact for discerning poverty in others, with a glance, through the noble falsehoods of pride, through

the touching manœuvres of shame. The elder of the two children was dressed with all attention to cleanliness; but his clothes, which had become short and tight, and his hair, that was too long and dry, showed that his mother took all the care possible of him that did not require money. I cannot tell what it was that saddened me when near this woman; her countenance was handsome, calm, and dignified; but I surprised a look gently raised towards heaven, and then falling back upon her two children, a sort of mute and furtive prayer. A slight, but cold and disagreeable mist was falling. All the women descended successively into the cabins; some men only remained upon deck; she was seated between her two children. She folded the plaid over the younger one. I would have given anything in the world to have detained the last woman that descended to the cabin; for I had seen what it was kept the poor mother on deck. Between her wrist and her glove I had seen the end of a yellow paper, which was the ticket given her in exchange for the price of her passage: mine was red, and designated the first place, she, therefore, had only taken second places; upon deck this was of no consequence, but if she wanted shelter, she must go down into a cabin in which were assembled all the travellers of the second class, workmen and meanly dressed women. I put up a prayer from the bottom of my heart that the rain might cease. A few minutes afterwards, a ray of sunshine dissipated the clouds; I believed that I had been heard, and I thanked God as earnestly as I had prayed.

"As we were leaving Trevoux on the left, all the travellers remarked a terraced garden on the Saône, shaded by a row of beautiful trees; these were the trees of Judea, whose blossoms, closely clinging to the branches, looked like a thick rose-coloured bower. A ray of the sun illuminated this smiling decoration. The boy directed his mother's attention to it. This drew a smile for her child from the bottom of her heart—but the smile faded away, and froze upon her lips. I could not remove my eyes from these three beings, and it appeared to me that a malignant fairy took delight in exposing to me, and making me guess, one by one, all the poverties they concealed. Some one asked what o'clock it was; the boy felt in his pocket, and my heart was oppressed with hope

and expectation; I would have given all the money I had to see him pull out a watch. In that moment of uncertainty, a thousand things passed in my mind. Perhaps I am deceived; she does not wear rings, but many women do not wear them. Perhaps she does not like jewels. I know an extremely rich lady who never will admit one in her dress. Alas! the boy only pulled out a pocket handkerchief.

"A man then answered the person who had asked what o'clock it was. He was a short man, rather thick-built than fat. He appeared to be about fifty years old, and wore his own grey hair. He was dressed in a surtout, with a waistcoat and trowsers of black cloth. It was plain that this man attached no idea to any colour, and had no partiality for one more than another; but that he was rich, and black, he had been told, looked proper on all occasions. His boots were large, the straps of his trowsers were not blacked; his head was wrapped in a large shirt collar, standing on end with starch; he had cotton in his ears; his ears had been pierced, but he wore no earrings. He displayed a large diamond in his shirt, and another on his finger; his two hands were almost constantly in the pockets of his trowsers; everything pronounced him a low-minded man become rich. If he answered the man who asked what the hour was, it was only because it gave him a reasonable occasion to pull out a large gold watch, with an immense bunch of seals; the watch being pulled out, he made it strike close to his ear to show it was a repeater.

"The boy drew near and looked at the watch, whilst he looked at the child, and perceived, as quickly as I had done, his short and tight clothes. 'Well!' said he in a harsh tone, 'you will know me again, shan't you? you stare at me enough.'

"Two other men laughed at this coarse pleasantry. The child became as red as fire. His mother called him with a soft but sad voice; first she scolded him a little, and then she kissed him. She preferred telling him that he was wrong to telling him he was poor.

"I walked to the side as if to look at something, and with a shove of the elbow turned the parvenu watch-owner round on his centre. He grumbled a little; I looked him full in

the face, and he crossed over to the other side of the boat. I longed to chat with that woman, but I feared to offend her by addressing her; perhaps she might fancy I was more bold with her than with others. The boy came and leant upon the side of the boat; I spoke to him, but I found myself absolutely timid with this child of twelve years old; I could almost have thanked him for having the kindness to answer me. I believed I beheld in this poverty the most respectable thing I had ever contemplated in my life. I should very much have liked to know whether the mother saw me talking with interest with her child, but I did not dare to look towards her. I swear that there was not the least personal thought in all this, for I had at that time in both my heart and my head as much love for another as they could reasonably contain; but I had perceived how this woman's feelings had been wounded by the rudeness of that wretched fellow. I hoped to efface this impression by a contrary one. I took pleasure in answering the questions of the boy, who was more bold with me than I was with him; and I likewise took pleasure in imagining the series of thoughts my attention to the child might create in the bosom of the mother. In the first place, she would perceive that her boy was not destined to be repulsed by everybody because he was poor; then she might think that his questions and language interested a man, and she might say to herself, 'He must be intelligent for that gentleman to take such notice of him—he will become a clever man—some day he will attain to honours.' She beckoned him to her with a sign; she drew from a kind of flat basket, concealed under her mantle, a piece of bread and two apples, which she gave him. There are whimsical things to be met with, that perhaps very few persons would comprehend. I had never seen this woman, and yet it appeared to me that there existed a mysterious tie between us. I heard within me a voice which said to her, 'Thou art unhappy, I will console thee; thou art poor, I will work for thee.' As I have proved, it was not love, but it was a warm, pious charity, full of respectful tenderness,—perhaps it was a kind of love; however that might be, if she had deigned to speak to me, I know my heart would have melted with joy.

"At length we arrived. The day was declining; the travellers got together their luggage; she had nothing but a band-box, which she kept close by her side. I conjured up a thousand romances. What can she be going to do at Lyons? Will she be more rich or more happy there? Now the porters called to us from the quays, recommending hotels to us: this tumult, these voices, all awakened me as from a dream. I began to fancy there was a kind of folly in the sentiments that had taken such strong hold of me. It is strange how soon we become reasonable; that is to say, less great, less noble, less generous, as we draw near to the cities of men. I determined, however, to do one thing.

"I divided my money into two parts. I put in one as much as would carry me back home again, without continuing my journey, and in the other what remained. My intention was to give it to the boy, in the midst of the confusion of leaving the boat, to avoid all possibility of refusal or thanks, to pass the night at an hotel, and return home on the morrow. But I went to look for my little portmanteau when the boat was moored at the quay, and when I returned could find neither mother nor children. I sought for them in the crowd; but I have reproached myself with thinking, that if my search had been as earnest as were my subsequent regrets, I should have found them. This noise, this crowd, these voices, all appeared to dissipate a sort of intoxication; it was necessary to take care of my portmanteau, and look for an hotel.

"By what a fine thread are held the few good or great thoughts that a man has in the course of his life, if it is to be broken by such petty shocks, such petty things, and such petty interests!

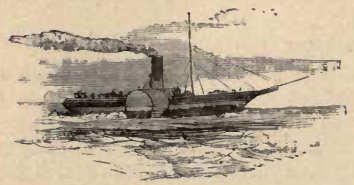
"I continued my route, dissatisfied with all I met with or saw, and what was still worse, dissatisfied with myself.

"I have retained another impression from this journey, still more unpleasant, perhaps, from being more hateful. As I followed, in fact, the shore of the lake of Geneva, I came to the castle of Chillon, between Clarens and Villeneuve, which is at the extremity of the lake. I was shown a subterranean vault, fifteen feet below the surface of the water, into which only a small quantity of light entered by an aperture that

has been much enlarged since the place ceased to be a prison. There I saw iron rings attached to the pillars; and, horrible to contemplate! deeply imprinted in the rock the steps of a prisoner who passed many years in the dungeon. I touched one of the rings, and as it fell back from my hand against the stone pillar it returned a sound so melancholy that it resounded in my heart. I could hear the lake growling over my head; I could scarcely breathe, and I hastened to re-ascend in order to gain a little fresh air, and remove some of the fearfully oppressive weight from my mind; but all the rest of the day I was a prey to a sort of delirium—I experienced all the sensations of despair and rage. It appeared as if my being was severed in two, and that half of it remained in that awful dungeon.

"I regretted bitterly the childishness which led me to write my name with the point of a knife upon one of the pillars, amidst a hundred other names, in order that the painters who had induced me to visit Switzerland might find a trace of my passage, and a proof that I had been there. I experienced a pain from the recollection that my name was in this horrible place; a false shame restrained me, or else I should have returned and have effaced it. Even now, when this impression has lost much of its strength, I should feel much better satisfied if my name were not there.

"I remained a few days at Lausanne, when, one morning, perceiving that I was at the end of my time, and likewise of my money, I returned home."



LETTER XXV.

AN AMATEUR FINDS FAULT WITH AN AURICULA.

One of the pet flowers of amateurs is the Auricula. Happy the flowers which have escaped *savants* and amateurs; they have not received ridiculous names; they are not tormented, distorted, or subjected to a thousand whimsical exigencies; they blossom in peace.

The learned require that the auricula should be yellow; if it presents itself clothed in any other colour, it is pronounced a monster, as double roses are.

Amateurs grant it permission to wear what colours it pleases; but this is only an appearance of liberty. I once saw an amateur in a state of fury. Some auriculas had been sent to him from I don't know what country: he had cultivated them with care; he had tormented them after the methods most approved of by amateurs; he had deprived them of water, and more particularly of sun and earth, by placing them in a pot, and as I went into his house he was

tearing them up, one by one, and trampling them under his feet. I understood, from his broken exclamations, that the auriculas had avenged themselves for the ill treatment they had received, by not fulfilling the conditions he required and had hoped for.

I, however, ventured a few questions, to assure myself of the fact, and at the same time to learn what horrible offence could have been committed by these poor flowers, which appeared to me to be decked with the richest colours, and to be in perfection. He continued his execution, pronouncing upon every one his motives of judgment and condemnation, before he crushed it under his feet.

I will place you in a condition to do as I did, and to derive instruction; that is to say, to learn what are the duties of the auricula towards its cultivator, and how it transgresses them.

He took up one of a beautiful velvety blue. Its stalk is too short, said he, and he crushed it. To this succeeded another of a rich velvet brown, with a white circle which is called the eye; its stalk is too long—crushed. A velvet orange; the flower is not exactly round—crushed. A deep purple velvet; the *bouquet* has only eight flowers, it ought to have twelve—crushed. A velvet olive; the eye slimy (that is to say, it is slightly tinged with the olive colour) —crushed. A velvet yellow; the eye does not occupy a third of the circumference of the flower; that is the least it ought possibly to do; I have a friend who requires half— I am more indulgent, but I cannot admit this—crushed. A velvet pale violet; the eye is not exactly round—crushed. A deep violet velvet; eh! what do you do here? your *clou* exceeds your *paillettes*, a pretty thing that!

Here I stopped the judge and executioner to request an explanation. Auricula fanciers call the pistils the *clou*, and the stamens the *paillettes*. The stamens ought to extend beyond the pistils, and appear alone; it is a very serious thing when the contrary happens to be the case. Whatever may be the colour or the splendour of the flower, a true amateur would scorn to keep such a one in his collection.

A hundred charming flowers were thus sacrificed before my eyes. I in vain endeavoured to save them by begging

that he would make me a present of them; my entreaty was rejected.

"Not at all, not at all; I will give you some others." "But these please me very much." "Nonsense; you are joking!" "Not at all, I assure you." "I cannot consent that such flowers should come from me; if it were known that I had given them I should subject either my collection or my friendship to animadversion." He was inflexible.

Do not imagine that I invent or exaggerate; seek for an amateur of auriculas, and read to him this passage of my letters. I can assure you beforehand that *he* will not smile, that *he* will see nothing ridiculous in it, that *he* will say his brother amateur was right, perhaps even a little too indulgent. In addition to the florist's lesson, this is a chapter to add to the rights of man. You now know what are the duties of auriculas, and I hope you will see how to make them perform them.

LETTER XXVI.

AN OLD WALL

I DO not dislike walls; it is sometimes a good and consoling reflection to be in a well-secured enclosure, alone with perfumes, flowers, trees, the heavens, the air, the sun, stars, remembrances and reveries, and to know that nobody can come and disturb you. I like walls, but I don't like white walls; I like nothing but old walls. I have one here, along which the course of my journey brings me, and which pleases me exceedingly. It is just as old as it ought to be; if it were a little older it would be given up to the mercies of the bricklayers, who would introduce all sorts of new bricks or white stones. As it is, it is grey and black, and is covered with twenty species of mosses and lichens. In the crevices of its top extends an absolute crown of yellow wallflowers and ferns. At its foot vegetate pellitory and nettles, in all their beautiful green; little crevices serve as an asylum for the lizards which run over the wall. Among the nettles live many caterpillars, which there spin webs and come forth brilliant butterflies.

Let us examine the nettles. The flowers of the nettle have the male and female blossom separate. The stamens of the males, in the season, perform an evolution which throws out a little shower of dust upon the female flowers. The hairs which cover nettles have at their base a little gland, in which is formed, by a portion of its sap, a caustic juice;

it is in the same manner that vipers bite, although peasants persist in saying that they sting.

There are many persons who eat young nettles cooked like spinach, as we are taught by a verse of Horace, and another of Persius. It was well worth the trouble to become masters of the world!

One of the inhabitants of the nettle is a thorny caterpillar, of a velvety black, marked with three white points. When its time is arrived, it hangs itself by the feet to the leaf of a nettle. At a later period it becomes a magnificent butterfly, black and red-brown, with an eye upon each wing; in which blue, violet, red, white and yellow, emulate the splendour of the eyes in the feathers of the tail of a peacock; whence this butterfly is called the *peacock butterfly*.

The *atalanta*,* with which we have already met as a caterpillar, lived upon the nettle. The butterfly called the *tortoiseshell* has been previously a green and brown striped caterpillar upon the nettle, and then a striped chrysalis. The *painted-lady* is also a guest of the nettle.

There is a time at which the old wall changes its appearance. Then it is green and rose-coloured. Bengal rose-trees hang like a tapestry over it up to the very top, so as to conceal it entirely. The roses are as numerous as the leaves; that palisade of ten paces in length does not exhibit less than from a thousand to twelve hundred roses in bloom at once. A painter would not dare to put so many on his rose trees; the arts stand in need of an appearance of truth—truth easily does without it. Here is a wall of pink or rose-coloured roses; at another corner extends a *turf* or *bed* of red roses. A hundred Bengal roses, with purple flowers, have been trained upon the ground, and cover it with leaves and flowers. But let us go back to the foot of the old wall.

The soil is there sandy and hot, the grass is thin,—there are no flowers to be seen: it is not, however, a desert; here, in the sand, is a little tunnel of two inches in width and nine in depth, dug spirally,—it is a trap made by a sportsman; but see, here he comes to finish his snare. The ant-lion lives on prey; it is a sort of yellowish worm, which appears grey on account of the labours to which it gives itself up, and which cover it with sand and dust; its head is

* Red-admiral.

large and flattened, and terminated by two horns, which have in some degree the form of those of the great stag-beetle.

The prey which supplies its food is nimble; it consists of flies, ants, woodlice, and spiders, and as it is only able to take a few steps at a time, and that backwards, it does not think of running down its game, but employs stratagem. There it is, working a spiral pit which begins at the surface, and is to attain a depth of several lines: at each step which it makes backward it stops, and with one of its feet loads its flattened head: the head being loaded like a shovel, it gives it a shake, and throws out of the hole the few grains of earth it carried. This is a long and fatiguing operation; nevertheless, a quarter of an hour suffices for the performance of it. There is the trap completed; the sportsman places himself at the bottom, burying himself in the sand, leaving out only his eyes, which are twelve in number, and two horns, which he stretches as far from each other as possible.

Think how ancient travellers have been obliged to lie, in order to make people believe they had seen Cyclops, that is to say, people who have but one eye; what a distance they were obliged to go to, to venture to say that they had seen men who ordinarily were called *one-eyed* in the country in which they lived. Well, for my part, without going from home, I have fallen in with a hunter with twelve eyes!

The ant-lion does not stir,—it might be believed to be dead or asleep; its horns do not betray the least motion. Ah! there is some game! An ant, going rather too close to the hole, made a grain of sand slip in, and fell with it into the trap to the depth of half a line. It climbs up again, but the precipice is steep, and the grains of sand give way beneath its feet; it loses ground,—it is at least six grains of sand lower than it was. One effort, however, has recovered it; it gets up again. Then the ant-lion, charging its head with sand, launches with violence a shower of dust at the ant, which makes it lose its equilibrium, and slip down; but it clings to the side, and endeavours to reascend. A second shower of sand falls upon it, and makes it lose the little ground it had regained. Then the hunter precipitates its blows, and soon the unfortunate ant, brought down at last by

the moveable soil which rolls away under its feet, and by the projectiles which are launched at it without intermission, ends by falling to the bottom of the tunnel, between the expanded horns of its enemy; the two horns close and pierce it, whilst seizing it, through and through; and then the hunter becomes motionless: its two horns are trunks through which it sucks its prey. In a short time nothing remains of the ant but the skin and the head. The ant-lion does not eat the heads of its prey,—the head is not to its taste; it places the relics upon the catapulta which serves him for a head, and throws them out of the hole. Then it covers itself up in the sand again, and resumes the position it was in before the arrival of the ant.

The place is well chosen! Here comes a wood-louse, which the heat of the sun incommodes, and which abandons the wall to find elsewhere some cool and moist crack in which it may conceal itself. There it is upon the very edge of the trap: it slips,—the ant-lion plays off its artillery; the wood-louse gets up again. In vain the hunter redoubles its blows; the wood-louse escapes.

A gnat, in its turn, contrives to fall into the snare; but it expands its wings and escapes, in spite of the shower of sand which its enemy launches at it. The wood-louse, in escaping, made great chasms in the tunnel; and this, no doubt, together with the ill-success of the last two hunts, determines the ant-lion to go and lay his ambushes elsewhere. He reascends his pit, and goes away, always travelling backwards, to seek a spot more favourable to his views.

But stop, you stupid creature!—take heed! It has no longer time: it has fallen heavily into the hole, at the bottom of which another hunter—another ant-lion—is in ambuscade. The latter seizes it, still stupified with its fall, fixes it between its two horns, sucks it, and makes an excellent repast of it.

Is it excess of hunger, or anger at seeing another hunter thus fall into its ambush and spoil it, that urges it to this act of ferocity? or do ant-lions see nothing in their own species but a variety of game and a tempting food?

The ant-lion is not condemned to keep thus upon the earth always; some evening in June, after having enjoyed a good dinner, it will bury itself deeper in the sand than usual, with

out leaving its horns out. There it shuts itself up in a ball, made of grains of earth stuck upon a web or cocoon of silk, the inside of which is whiter and finer than the most beautiful satin. It soon becomes a sort of dragon-fly, which cuts with its teeth the cocoon which incloses it. This fly, which has at first the appearance of those dragon-flies that we have met with, and whose larva lives in the mud of water, differs from them in several points. In the first place, it has not the same degree of magnificence in its dress; it is grey, with a little yellow border on each wing: besides, its broader wings are also longer than those of the dragon-flies of the meadows, and, when at rest, are placed over its body, which they entirely cover, in the form of a roof, whilst the other keeps them spread. I only speak of the differences which present themselves to the eye of an ignorant person; the learned see many others that exist, and more still that do not exist.

There is another insect which, as well as the ant-lion, lays traps in the sand, in which to catch the game upon which it lives; that is the tiger-beetle, a pretty beetle, dressed in green velvet, spotted with white, which, when touched, emits the smell both of the rose and of musk. Its flight is a leap of six feet, for which it makes use of its wings. Before its transformation, in its first form, the tiger-beetle lives likewise upon insects, but it is not constructed so as to enable it to pursue them: it is therefore obliged to catch in traps a prey which, at a later period, it will know how to seize, by pouncing upon it like a carnivorous bird. It digs, in a sandy soil, a narrow hole, sometimes a foot deep: it reascends to the earth by the same means that chimney-sweepers employ. When there, it bends its head, and makes a bridge of it, upon which the abyss of two lines in width which it has dug may be passed. When an insect passes over this bridge, the bridge becomes a trap, sinks beneath its steps, and precipitates it to the bottom of the hole, where it is devoured.

Many poets and philosophers have reproached man severely with being the only animal that is the enemy of its own species. Poets and philosophers are wrong: all animals destroy each other, and eat each other.

I can with more justice reproach man on another account,

which is, that his is the only species in which the individual is his own enemy. Man deprives himself of sleep, feeds himself with aliments that abridge life. Women lace themselves so tightly in their corsets as to embarrass the play of the organs, and even displace their ribs. Men, not content with two or three real wants which nature has imposed upon them, create for themselves fresh ones every day, and exhaust all their genius in inventing new means of rendering themselves poor and miserable.

LETTER XXVII.

THE CHILDISH THEFT—RETRIBUTION.

One day, a child came into my garden; he surrounded a space of about a foot square with sticks; then he gathered some roses, and planted them, by sticking the stalks in the ground. He did the same by a very fine pink.

When I returned, I felt a sensation of impatience, and if the child had been there, it is probable that I should have scolded him severely; but he was gone, happily for him, because I should have frightened him, and happily for myself, because I should have certainly said many foolish things.

Not seeing him, I reflected a little, and remembered two things. The first is, that I do exactly what this child has done. Before I had a garden of my own, I walked freely in the woods, on the banks of rivers, on the shores of the sea. One day I bought myself a large plot of ground, which I surrounded with stones in the form of a wall; and I planted in

it trees and flowers brought from all sorts of soils. The child had liberty to walk in all my garden, to see and inhale all the flowers; he preferred enclosing a little square patch, and to stick in it two or three of these same flowers, exactly as I had done, only it cost him nothing but the time in which he did it, and I have spent much money. Then, when his garden was made, he left it, went to amuse himself with something else, and forgot it; whilst I, with this plot of ground, have purchased a thousand cares.

Formerly, if the wind in its fury blew down *a* tree, that was a spectacle for me; to-day, it breaks one of *my* trees, and that is a fear beforehand, a regret and a loss afterwards. I like old ruined walls falling into dust, and creating retreats for the lizards; now-a-days, I feel a great inclination to have *my* wall repaired, some of the stones being detached.

The second thing I recollected was, that I formerly did, when I was a child, exactly the same thing in the garden of another person, that this child did in mine.

My brother and I were then quite little fellows, and we were sent in the morning to a sort of school, not, I suppose, that we might learn anything—not that we might be at school—but that we might not be at home; where, probably, we made more noise than was agreeable.

The master of the school, or of the academy, I don't know which title he claimed for himself, was like others; he was an honest *restaurateur*, who made up for the butter he did not put into the soup of his pupils by instruction which he was supposed to impart to them. The plan of these houses, in which it is always announced that the heart and the mind of youth is formed, is always invariably established on this problem: to find a means of selling soup in the most advantageous way possible. The problem is resolved in the manner of the possessors of cafés, who propose one nearly analogous: viz. to find the means of selling for fifteen or twenty sous that which people would have better at home, and without inconvenience, for four or five sous. The cafés have the journals; the schoolmasters. those other public-house keepers, have Latin.

This worthy, who was named M. Roncin, was the largest man I ever saw; this was his only means of obtaining con-

sideration. Madame Roncin presided in the kitchen, with the help of a female servant. The other cookery, the Latin, was carried on by two or three poor fellows, ill fed and ill paid. They must have cost the establishment much less than the butter would have cost that ought to have been added to the soup, if a cook of another kind had been in question.

To tell the truth, it was the servant that was the real mistress of the house. M. Roncin was a sort of cipher; and Madame Roncin, who directed everything, never decided upon anything without consulting with Marianne before the stove.

We being among the number of the smallest, were shut up during six hours of the day in what was called the French class. We passed the time in the best way we could; we made birds and boats with paper,—we played odd or even with marbles. When the master caught us, he confiscated our marbles, threw away our birds and boats, and placed us on our knees in a corner of the room; then he made us learn and repeat by heart something which began in this manner: "Grammar is the art of speaking and writing correctly," &c., of which we comprehended nothing, and he very little. He was a poor, old, thin man, who went through it all with the most serious countenance imaginable.

There were nearly two hours of the day consecrated to what was called recreation. During these two hours they let us loose in a large court, in which were three or four old trees that had stood out against both time and the school-boys. What joy, and what cries, and what a tumult! How we used to run and jump—how happy we used to be! It happened one day that one of us, I don't know which, took it into his head to make a garden: he dug up with his knife, in a corner, a square about the size of a table, he traced walks of four inches in width, put sand on his walks, and planted some small branches torn from the large trees in the flower beds, and also a stalk cut from a gillyflower, which had blossomed of itself in the wall. Gardens became the fashion. Those who, like us, were day boys, that is to say, only came in the morning and went away at night, brought every day branches of cut flowers and seeds of all sorts. The flowers were faded by the end of an hour, and

the seeds were forgotten and replaced by others a fortnight before they could have germinated.

My brother and I went in the morning, with a little basket, in which were put the provisions for the day—slices of bread-and-butter and some fruit, destined for a meal while the other boys were at dinner. We were humiliated by the neighbourhood of a garden that quite eclipsed ours. The possessor of this garden had, as we had done in ours, sown some peas. His were much handsomer than ours. Perhaps he had taken them up less frequently to see if they had germinated.

One day we were inspired with the means of putting an end to our envy, and at the same time of awakening it in our comrades. My father had a neighbour; each possessed the half of a large garden, which was divided only by a walk. This neighbour had some magnificent hyacinths, and was very proud of them. We took it into our heads to transfer these hyacinths to our school-garden. In the evening I stole quietly from the house, and went straight to the bed of hyacinths; I trembled a little, but I seized one by the stalk. I pulled it in order to break it, but the root followed the stalk. I did not want the root—there was nothing pretty in that, and I saw no use in it. Nevertheless, I deferred separating it till I could safely throw it away; but I had not the time. I took a second hyacinth, then a third; I concealed them in the cellar. I went into the house again, and my brother, in his turn, attacked the hyacinth bed. Nisus and Euryalus did not commit greater havoc among the Rutulians. When morning came, never had we been up so early, or so ready to go to school. We laid eight or ten roots at the bottom of our basket, and three or four, the flower stalks of which we had gathered without the root; and then we placed our bread-and-butter at the top.

These are but bad recollections, you will say, my friend; and yet I can assure you, that neither my brother nor I acquired from this boy's trick any propensity for stealing. The same thing happened to St. Augustine, who, when a child, was a thief, as we were, and relates the circumstance in his Confessions with a sort of witty, half-roguish contrition.

"There was," says he, "a pear-tree near our vine loaded with fruit; one night, after having, as usual, rambled about the streets, we went, a troop of young rogues, and I, to gather these pears; which we did, and if we tasted one it was simply for the pleasure of doing what we were forbidden to do."

I had not, as St. Augustine had, the consolation of being punished for my crime by the crime itself. If his pears were not sweet, I must confess that the hyacinths were beautiful. My punishment arrived late; it did not arrive until yesterday, but it did arrive.

The hyacinths were beautiful, and we enjoyed beforehand the admiration and envy they would create at playtime. We went straight to school, under the care of the gardener, without stopping as usual to gape into the shop windows. When arrived, as we knew the hyacinths would stand a chance of being stolen, we would not place our basket in the corner where the baskets were usually deposited; we kept ours, and concealed it under the form between our legs. It appeared to us that this interminable class would never be over, or the moment arrive at which we could go and plant our hyacinths. All at once the door was opened, and Madame Roncin entered. She called us both in one of her blandest tones: "I am told you have brought some beautiful flowers for your garden. Let me see them."

Then we were like La Fontaine's raven; we took our basket and gave it up to the admiration of Madame Roncin. In the first place, Madame took out the slices of bread-and-butter and placed them on the table of old father Poquet; then she took out the hyacinths, one by one, and ranged them near the bread-and-butter. At this moment I raised my eyes and saw, close against the windows of the school-room door, two faces! two formidable faces! that of the owner of the hyacinths, and that of the gardener, whom my father had sent to fetch us home to expiate our fault. I will not inflict upon you the detail of the reproaches we received, or of the punishment reserved for us till our return to school the next day. We were ordered to carry our basket to the kitchen, where Madame Roncin and her servant were at breakfast. Both saluted us with the title of *little thieves*. At first we

cried a little; but my brother whispered, "I say, Stephen, did you see anything?" "Yes; didn't you?" And that which we had seen was, that on one of the stoves were two of the finest hyacinths in pots, which Madame Roncin had contrived, by some means, to appropriate to herself.

I soon forgot both the hyacinths and our offence, but I could not help, yesterday, remembering both the one and the other. My beautiful roses, that I had looked forward to during ten months! my own diamonds! my dear flowers! I went every morning, from the day of their blooming, to salute them, the first thing on entering my garden; I examined them to see if anything had injured them, to see if any insect were gnawing the buds. I gazed at them, I breathed their perfume, and I felt myself rich and almost insolent. And this confounded child inhumanly tore them from their boughs, and stuck them in *his* garden, where they died in a few hours! And my pink! a beautiful Flemish pink, white with violet bands; a pink which I had, only the evening before, obstinately refused to a lady who requested it of me! Then, and not till then, was I aware of all the grief I had caused our poor neighbour, the man of the hyacinths.

It appeared to me that I underwent one of those vengeances that Dido announces to the perjured Æneas:—

"Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor."

That child was not then born who now forces from me such just reflections.

In fact, it is our children who will repay us the pains and anxieties that we have cost our parents. At the same time, let us not require from them the tenderness we feel for them; it is not to us that they owe it or will pay it, it is to the children they will themselves have, and of whom they will complain unjustly, then, as we complain of them, and as our fathers complained of us.

"We only remember the respect and gratitude we owe to our parents to require it of our children."

LETTER XXVIII.

THE PIPE AND THE SNUFF-BOX.

THERE exists a family of venomous plants, among which are the Henbane, Datura stramonium, and Tobacco. Tobacco is, perhaps, less venomous than the Datura, but it is more so than the Henbane, which is a violent poison.

Here is a tobacco-plant, which is as fine a plant as we could wish to see; it is six feet high, and from the bosom of large leaves of a beautiful green, throws out bunches of pink flowers, of a graceful, elegant form.

For a length of time tobacco flourished solitary and unknown in some corners of America. Savages, whom the smoke of tobacco intoxicated, on great occasions gave us tobacco in exchange for brandy. It was by such a friendly exchange of poisons that the relations between the two worlds commenced.

The first who thought proper to introduce the powder of tobacco into their noses were laughed at; afterwards they

were subjected to a slight persecution. James I. king of England, wrote a book, called "Miso-capnos," against those who took snuff. A few years afterward Pope Urban VIII. excommunicated those who used tobacco or snuff in churches. The Empress Elizabeth thought fit to add to the penalty of excommunication against such as crammed their noses with this black powder during divine service; she authorized the beadles to confiscate the snuff-boxes to their own profit. Amurath IV. forbade the use of snuff under the penalty of having the nose cut off.

A useful plant could not have resisted such attacks.

Suppose, before this discovery or invention. a man had been found who would have said,—"Let us seek for a means of bringing into the coffers of the state a voluntary impost of several millions of francs per annum; this can be done by selling people a thing which everybody may use,—a thing which, when once enjoyed, they will not do without. There is in America an essentially venomous plant; if you distil an empyreumatic oil from its leaves, a single drop would suffice to make an animal expire in horrible convulsions. Let us offer this plant for sale, chopped up into pieces or reduced to powder: we will sell it very dear: we will direct people to cram this powder up their noses."

"What! would you force them to do so by law?"

"Not at all; I told you it was to be a voluntary tax. As for that which was chopped up, we would tell them to inhale it, and swallow a little of the smoke."

"But they will die!"

"Oh no, they will not: they will become rather pale; they will have pains in the stomach, vertigoes, sometimes cholics, vomitings of blood, and occasionally pains in the chest,—that's all. Besides, look you, it has been said that *use is second nature;* and then not enough has been said: man is like this knife, which has successively had three new blades and two new handles; the natural man no longer exists, he is nothing but a bundle of habits. Besides, people will do as Mithridates, king of Pontus, did; he accustomed himself to take poison till it lost all effect upon him.

"The first time the people smoke tobacco, they will have pains of the heart, nausea, vertigoes, cholics, and cold sweats;

but all that will go off a little; and, with time, they will become so accustomed to it as only to experience these accidents now and then, only when they smoke bad or too strong tobacco, or when the stomach shall be out of order, or in five or six other cases.

"Those who take it in powder will sneeze, will feel slightly unwell at first, will lose their fine sense of smell, and will establish in their noses a sort of perpetual vesicatory."

"Ah! then I suppose it smells very nice?"

"No! on the contrary, it smells very disagreeably. My plan is, that we sell this very dear, and reserve the monopoly of it."

"My good friend," the man senseless enough to hold such language would have been answered, "nobody will dispute the privilege with you of selling a thing of which there will be no buyers. You would have a much better chance if you would open a shop, and write over it—

KICKS ARE SOLD HERE!

Or,—

HORSEWHIPPINGS SOLD HERE, WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.

You would find more customers than for your venomous herb."

Well, you see it was the second speaker who would have been in the wrong; the tobacco speculation has perfectly succeeded. The kings of France did not write satires against tobacco, they did not cut off people's noses, they did not confiscate snuff-boxes. Far from that; they sold tobacco, they established a tax upon noses, and made presents to poets of snuff-boxes, with their portraits on the lids and diamonds all around them. This little trade brings them in I don't know how many millions every year.

Fragon, the physician of Louis XIV., was to maintain a thesis against snuff in the schools; being ill, his place was supplied by a brother medicus, who read the thesis—taking enormous quantities of snuff all the while!

The poet Santeuil died almost suddenly, after having drunk a glass of wine, into which some snuff had been put.

Potatoes had much more difficulty in establishing themselves than tobacco had, and still have adversaries.

"My good friend," you will here say, "you are a strange preacher! I would almost venture to bet, that you have smoked to-day in that long cherry pipe ornamented with such a large amber mouth-piece, and which is hung so ostentatiously on the wall of your study."

I must confess I smoke, my friend. I acquired the habit among fishermen and sailors, and practised it for another reason. I formerly frequently fell in with people who wearied and annoyed me. I was willing to be with them while they were talking, but I had a great objection to talking too; I had absolutely nothing to say to them; I found it polite and convenient to make them smoke and smoke myself;—they spoke less, and I did not speak at all. Now, although I do smoke sometimes, I am likewise sometimes whole months without taking down my pipe: I never smoke in my garden; I am not willing to mingle the odour of tobacco with the perfume of my flowers.

What charming travellers are all these flowers assembled together from all parts of the world! Tobacco comes from America; the Queen Marguerite comes from China; the heliotrope, from Peru; the day lily, from Portugal; the rose-laurel, from Greece; the azaleas are originally from India; the tulip is from Asia.

I could write a capital history of the voyages I have failed to make. I was very nearly going to Greece, to see the wild uncultivated rose-laurels blow, with their roots in the waters of the Eurotas. I learnt that quite as good were to be seen in the south of France, so I did not go.

There are things which we do all at once, or else never do at all. The excess of the thing gives you an excess of resolution; and in making the tour of the world, to have descended your own staircase is to have performed a quarter of the undertaking.

LETTER XXIX.

QUASI APIARIAN.

A SINGULAR dictionary might be made, by taking, one after the other, every word in the language, and describing for what infamies, basenesses, crimes, and follies it has furnished man with a pretext. The most sacred and the most respected words, without doubt, would produce the longest articles.

The name of the Almighty would make many volumes: that of liberty, likewise, would not be very concise.

There is not a word, however insignificant it may appear at first sight, which, if it has succeeded, thanks to its want of

sound, in not being the cause of a great crime or a great folly, may not have been used in promulgating some absurdity or other; savants and grammarians are at hand to fill up the voids.

By searching thoroughly, we shall find that every letter even, has isolately served as a subject of some impertinences at least; every one knows the history of the two schoolmasters, whose ears a king caused to be cut off, because they refused to adopt two letters added to the alphabet by this prince, who was as cruel as they were silly. We know that there have been two hundred volumes written, several councils held, long persecutions made and undergone, with deaths and tortures, for a diphthong added to or cut off from the *Credo*. We likewise know the disputes and hatreds raised regarding the real pronunciation of the letter K.

The letter A, which commences all dictionaries, is it not, in French, the third person of the verb *avoir*, to have; is not *avoir* the root of avarice? How many volumes would it require to describe the baseness and crimes committed for *avoir*, to have?

By following up the words, one by one, you will not be long before you arrive at the word *abeille* (bee). A large volume might be made of nothing but the silly things men have said on the subject of bees. It was thinking of bees that brought to my mind the idea of this dictionary, which may be entitled, The Misanthropical Dictionary, or the History, in an alphabetical order, of the follies and wickednesses of Man.

There is however one thing to be observed; many of the silly things said about bees have not been said by the moderns, because the ancients abused their position to say them first. The moderns have only been able to repeat them and teach them in their colleges, as they do to the present day. You have, my friend, passed ten years,—as I did, as everybody has,—in learning Latin. During five or six, Virgil was your principal subject of thought and study; and you always esteemed him with an admiration without bounds and without restriction during six years, that is to say, according to the usages of colleges, during six professors. Never did one professor think it worth his while to remark, that the

Bucolics are thickly sprinkled with base and ridiculous adulations; that the Georgics are stained with false ideas and erroneous opinions. That was not the question! Ideas, sentiments, *words*, were the things necessary to be learnt.

There called on me the other day a man apparently as happy as possible. You know, my friend, what respect I have for all kinds of happiness; you have seen me step out of my way, for fear of disturbing a bird that was picking up a grain of corn, or a peasant that was sleeping under a tree. I listened to the account of the happiness of this man. He is having a good education as it is called given to his son; not an education that may teach him to be satisfied with a little, to be firm and courageous, to be strong and independent. No; he has him taught Latin. "I make many sacrifices," said he to me, "but I am largely recompensed; my boy is surprising for his age. I wish you would see him." I did not dare to refuse, and he sent the little fellow to me.

On his entrance he saluted me with an ease and confidence that I have never been able to acquire in all my life, except when I find myself face to face with people who are hostile to me, because then my timidity dies for fear of degenerating into cowardice.

I found him thin and pale; he has neither the petulance nor the peach-like bloom of boyhood; nothing is in blossom with him, neither his mind nor his cheeks: he is but thirteen years old; and I at first really thought him surprising for his age.

I was in the garden: I continued to walk about with him. As we passed through a spot where the grass is divided by a rivulet of little more than two feet wide, he left me, to go to a small bridge to pass over it; I was almost ashamed of having jumped over it. As we came near to the violet turf, upon which is a hive,—"Ah! ah!" said he,

"Aerii mellis cœlestia dona."

"Yes," replied I, "it is a hive. Are you acquainted with bees? It is a very interesting study."

"Oh, certainly, I am acquainted with them," answered he;

"Mores et studia, et populos, et prælia dicam."

"True. Well, I am not so far advanced as you; there are many things upon this subject which I am still anxious to learn, without too confidently hoping to succeed."

"Have you not read Virgil?"

"Yes, my young friend; but a long time ago."

"Well! it was from Virgil I learnt to be acquainted with bees; and we are at this very time translating the fourth book of the Georgics."

"Impart to me a portion of that which you know, if you please; perhaps it will throw a light upon some points which I find doubtful"

"Willingly, Sir. The bees are governed by a king. Many pretenders generally dispute their suffrages; but the one who is the true sovereign is easily recognised by certain signs. The one is handsome and majestic,* covered with a golden cuirass;† the other, who is but a usurper and a tyrant, is horrible to behold. He is cowardly and idle, and has a great belly; in a word, he merits death. He is killed by the partisans of the true king."

I listened attentively to these very false notions, recited with admirable confidence by the young savant.

"I remember having read that, in the Georgics of Virgil; but I am sorry I have not the book here, I would have had recourse to it for a circumstance which embarrasses me: I have lost a part of my bees, and I think I recollect that Virgil points out a sure way of recalling them."

"Nothing is more simple, Sir. You take a young bull,‡—a bull of two years old,—you kill it, and leave the carcase enclosed in a hut to corrupt. In the following spring, as soon as the meadows are enamelled with their earliest flowers, you will find that from this corruption worms will be born, which will very shortly become bees."

* "Alter erit maculis auro squalentibus ardens,
Hic melior insignis et ære,
Et nitidis elarus squammis."—VIRG.

† "Ille horridus alter,
Desidiam latamque trahens ingloiius alvum."—VIRG.

‡ "Tum vitulus bina curvans jam cornua fronte
Quæritur."
"Plagisque perempto
Tunsa per integram solvuntur viscera pellem," &c.—VIRG. *Georg.* lib iv.

"Indeed! well, that's very convenient!"

"This is not the way, besides, that bees are naturally born."

"I can very well believe so."

"They are not subjected to the pains of giving birth." *

"So much the better for them."

"They find their young upon flowers and odoriferous shrubs." †

"Which, for instance?"

"It is upon the Cerintha, in particular, that the *kings* are born."

"What is the Cerintha?"

"A substantive of the first declension."

"Is it nothing but that?"

"It is probably a tree or a plant."

"Has it never been pointed out to you?"

"No. How do you think it possible that plants should be shown to us in class?"

"Well, then, I will show it to you. The name of Cerintha, or Cerinthe, is composed of two Greek words, and means wax-flower. It is yonder pretty plant, with thick sea-green foliage, covered with little spikes of yellow flowers; it is called in French *Melinet*, that is to say, honey-flowers."

"Sir, I am exceedingly obliged to you."

"You have reason to be so, my young friend, for it is the only truth that has been taught you with respect to bees."

"What, Sir, all that I have just told you?—"

"All that you have just now said, or rather recited, is a tissue of lies, so much the more ridiculous from being far less wonderful than the truth itself."

At this moment the father entered. I informed him of the error into which his son had been led, and said to him: "Your son is intelligent, but he is ill-directed. It is all very well to be able to speak well and fluently; but style is but a vestment, there should be a body beneath it. At the same time that children are taught to read the harmonious verses of Virgil, the false ideas which those verses so magnificently

* "Non fœtus nixibus edunt."

† "Verum ipsæ foliis natos et suavibus herbi
Ore legunt."

embellish, ought to be corrected. You ought, on your part, to make your son read some good work upon bees; it would interest him greatly. and prevent his taking the fourth book of Virgil's Georgics as a true history."

"Sir," replied the father, "I cannot think of interrupting his studies!"

Fine studies these; to learn words, always words, nothing but words; to talk of things, without being acquainted with things; to repeat nonsense correctly! Such is the employment of our youth!

LETTER XXX.

BEES.

WHILST we are upon this subject, my friend, I will relate to you such of the established absurdities concerning bees as recur to my memory.

Aristotle mentions that the bee adopts one flower, and never collects its honey but from flowers of the same kind.

The same Aristotle:—That when it is windy, the bee keeps itself steady in its flight, by carrying grains of sand between its feet.

The same Aristotle:—That bees without a king only make wax and not honey. That they drive from the hive the most greedy, the most idle, &c. &c.

Pliny adds, probably after a more profound study of the penal code of the bees, that in cases of relapse or obstinacy in the above-mentioned vices, they are punished in divers ways, and even with death in certain circumstances.

Both of these celebrated writers have made long eulogiums, copied a hundred times over by the moderns, upon their justice, their bravery, their modesty, their loyalty, their political science, and their skill in government.

They were not content with Virgil's bull. It was advised

that a lion should take the place of the rotten bull, because then the bees are stronger and more courageous. Even in 1735, the fathers of Trevoux took up warmly against Réaumur the defence of two Jesuits, who persisted in teaching that insects came from putrefaction. After having said that bees found their young ready-made upon flowers and leaves, they changed about a little, and asserted that young bees were born from the corruption of honey.

It was pretended that the queen of the bees* (obstinately called the king) had no sting. Many devices were made from this belief. Louis XII., on entering into Genoa, appeared in a white dress, sown over with golden bees, with these words as his device:—*Rex non utitur aculeo* (the king has no sting). Pope Urban VIII. placed bees in his coat of arms, with this Latin verse under them:—

"Gallis mella dabunt, Hispanis spicula figent."
(The honey for France, the sting for Spain.)

A Spaniard replied:—

"Spicula si figent, emorientur apes."
(When the bee stings, it dies.)

The Pope caused the following distich to be circulated:—

"Cunctis mella dabunt, nulli sua spicula figent,
Spicula nam princeps figere nescit apum."
(They will have honey for all, and wounds for nobody, for the king of the bees has no sting.)

It was well worth while, before Pliny, for the philosopher Aristomachus to pass fifty-eight years in studying bees; and for another philosopher, Hyliscus, to retire into a desert, for the sole purpose of contemplating bee-hives!

It has been said, and it is still believed in many places, that bees do not sting wool, and that with woollen gloves they may be handled with impunity; which is all very true, when the woollen gloves are thicker than the sting of the bee is long: under similar conditions you may make use of what stuff you please. It has been asserted that bees hatch their eggs as hens do.

Even to the present day in the country, if any one dies in a house, crape is placed upon the hives, without which

* See the upper figure of the cut in p. 190.

the bees would be angry at a want of respect, which would lead them to believe they were considered as strangers, and not as part of the family. And you may have repeated to you, as long as you are willing to listen, instances in which such and such a one has lost all his bees, from failing in this act of politeness towards the bees, who refused to live with such ill-bred people, and flew away. Still further; you must, on no account, swear when you are near bees. If you buy a swarm, you must not haggle about the price; bees hate meanness, and will not stay with you if you do. They have an antipathy to thieves; I believe it is a question, however, whether this extends beyond the plunderers of honey. These virtuous flies love virtuous men, know how to distinguish them, and entertain a strong hatred for vice and the vicious. It is not safe to go near them with any crime upon your conscience.

It is very evident, that if these flies were more numerous and larger, they would suffice for making virtue reign upon earth, and would very advantageously fill the places of judges, policemen, and gaolers.

All these simple tales, I repeat, are particularly contemptible, in this respect; they have only been imagined in order to attribute to bees something marvellous, which is really far beneath the truth.

We will content ourselves, in the journey we are about to make round my hive, with the things we shall see with our two eyes.

What a concourse at the opening of the hive! Never was the public square of a great city witness of such agitation! Some bees are issuing in great haste, and flying away to a distance in search of provisions, whilst others are returning loaded with them. We must, in the first place, ascertain what the bees thus go to seek in the neighbouring country: the first thing is a sort of resin, called *propolis*, which they find upon certain trees—firs, yews, birches, &c.; next, *pollen*, or the fecundating powder of flowers, of which they make bee-bread; and then they plunder the *nectaries* of flowers for a juice which becomes honey.

Here is one bringing materials: after having rolled itself in the pollen of flowers, it has, with its hind feet made spoon-

fashion, and armed with hairs as rough as those of a brush, gathered together in little pellets the grains of pollen which have remained about the hairs with which its body is covered. There are five or six bees whose baskets are well laden. Some have collected their burden from a single flower; and it is easy to ascertain from what flower, however far it may grow from the hive. The powder this one bears is white; the bee has been wallowing, if we may use such a word, in a *mallow*, whilst his companion, covered with brown powder, has been plundering the tulips. That yellow pollen comes from the blossom of a melon, &c. &c. Some of those who arrive enter the door; others deliver up their provisions to other bees who receive them at the door, and as soon as they have got rid of their burden they resume their flight. They are not at all less busy inside of the hive than without: these make with wax hexagonal cells, in which others come and disgorge honey Other cells are kept empty: these are the nests destined for the young bees.

The hive is peopled by three sorts of bees: first one female, that is the queen; males, called drones, to the number of nearly two thousand; and eight or ten thousand workers, without sex, which consequently do not multiply, having besides plenty to do, and no time to spare for amusement. The queen, with her harem of drones, suffices for the reproduction of the race—she lays at least six thousand eggs in a year! Of these eggs, some will produce females like herself; others, males; and the remainder, in still greater numbers, workers without sex. Whilst the queen is engaged in the duties of providing another generation, all the workers are busy with the cradles and the food of the numerous family which she will soon bring into the world.

There arrives a period when the workers have a great operation to perform. The queen has no more time to waste in love, she has other imperative tasks in view; the males have completed their destiny, and being from that time useless and an incumbrance, the workers make a general massacre of them, and cast their carcases out of the colony. The queen begins to lay: followed by a train of working bees, she commences her progress over the cells. When, after examining the interior of one of these cells, she finds it to her mind,

she deposits an egg in it, and resumes her march. During all this time, the workers which surround her lick her, clean her, and offer her honey with their little trunks. All the cells are not of the same size; some, of similar form to the ordinary cells destined to contain provisions, and to serve as nests for the eggs which are to produce common bees, are larger by a ninth than these; they will be the cradles of the males. Others of a different form, of a rounded and oblong figure, are destined to contain the eggs which will become females like the queen.

Bees employ admirable economy in the use of their wax. Several learned geometricians have endeavoured to prove what should be the form of cells that would require the least possible wax, and, as the result of their problem, have arrived at the conclusion that it is exactly that which is adopted by the bees. Well, but when the object is to build a royal cell, they renounce this economy altogether: a single one of these cells requires as much wax as a hundred and fifty ordinary cells. According to the time of year, the queen chooses, for depositing her eggs, one of these three sorts of cells. Such of the cells as contain the provision of honey are hermetically sealed with lids of wax; those in which the eggs are placed are left uncovered: these eggs are of a bluish white. Two days afterwards, from this egg issues a worm; several times in the course of the day a working bee brings it food. A bee often passes over several cells without stopping; the reason of which is that it finds the worms sufficiently provisioned. In proportion with the growth of the worms, their food, a kind of pap which they give them, becomes more substantial and is otherwise composed. A paste quite different in taste is given to the worms which are to become fruitful queens. At the end of six days the worms are about to be transformed, and no more food is brought to them; the workers fasten them into their cells by placing lids of wax over them. The worm thus shut up lines its dwelling with a hanging of extremely fine silk, and then undergoes two transformations. At the second, it is a perfect bee.

The bee opens the lid with its teeth, and comes out of the cell. During this time other bees clean out the cell that has just been abandoned, taking away the cast-off vestments of the

worm, and carrying them out of the hive; with equal care they remove the little particles of wax which may have fallen into the cell when the lid was pierced. Other bees tear away all that remains of this lid. In a word, they restore the cells to a condition to receive a fresh egg, or to become a magazine for honey. The young bee enters at once upon its functions; two hours after its birth, you could not recognise it but by its colour, which is rather grey, whilst the others become reddish as they grow old. As soon as its wings are smooth and shining, it goes out, flies away, and does not return till laden. But not only one bee at a time is thus born, more than a hundred issue from their cells, on the same day; so that, at the end of a few weeks, the hive is over-peopled.

One morning, you observe a kind of revolution. The activity which reigned round the hive has suddenly disappeared. A few bees only come out and return, lightly laden. A colony is about to separate itself from the parent hive, and go and seek other penates. About ten o'clock in the morning, when the sun shines brightly, a great buzzing is heard in the hive; some bees fly out in a tumultuous state—they precede the old queen. She soon appears; she is much longer and larger than the working bees; her wings scarcely extend over half the length of her body; her hind-feet are not hollowed into the shape of a spoon; she has no necessity for travelling far, and brings home no burdens. She is not destined to work. Her particular part is to be, literally, the mother of her people.

At no great distance, the first bees that come out go and heap themselves up in large clusters around the branch of some tree; the queen comes amongst them: then all the bees, before spread about in the air, come and cling around her. Most of these are young workers, who follow the fortunes of their royal mother; some old ones, however, of a restless character, come out with the colony and abandon the metropolis. There they remain assembled for more than a quarter of an hour, and sometimes much longer; then they resume their flight in search of a more convenient establishment. It is during these moments of hesitation and immobility, that the swarm is easily swept entire into a hive in which, finding

themselves comfortably installed, they remain willingly, and on the morrow commence their labours. If, by chance, a part only of the swarm has been taken, and the queen is not among the captives, none of the bees will work; there will be neither wax nor honey made in the hive. The motive which gives such ardour to the workers, is the certainty of having among them a fruitful mother, whose young family it is their duty to feed and bring up.

In general, the drones have remained, if not all, almost all, in the old hive. The other queens are massacred, and their bodies dragged out. It sometimes happens that at the moment of the coming out of the swarm, two young mothers at once pretend to the sovereignty of the new colony. In fact, sometimes twenty of them are born in a single hive. If two queens come out at the same time, the swarm divides, but unequally; each of the two queens establishes herself and her partisans upon a different branch.

Our young laureate told us, according to Virgil, what was formerly thought of these two *kings*. If one were the model of all the virtues, the other was but a brazen-faced scoundrel. The first was covered with gold; the second, shabbily drest, and had a great belly.

Another more modern author who has written upon bees, in French, expresses himself in analogous terms. He calls the false king the *tyrant*.

"His dismal colour, his great belly, his rough legs, and his languid gestures, are signs of envy, avarice, ambition, gluttony, cowardice, idleness," &c. &c.

Certainly, never was monarch so ill-treated; the tyrants of tragedy are, beyond contradiction, the most patient and the most meek of men. Every character in the piece spouts his two hundred verses of invectives against them without interruption; and if one of the tyrants stops them by crying out. "Hola! my guards!" it is not till the other has exhausted his vocabulary, without cutting off one hemistich or misplacing one rhyme. This poor tyrant of the bees is not much better dealt with. It is a fortunate thing for him that the writer did not know that Beelzebub means king of the flies; he certainly would not have spared him that name. But this is not all: "The tyrant comes out of the hive, and gets away

from the legitimate king like a traitor; a part of the people revolt, and go and *branch* with him, where they would be lost, were it not that, perceiving their error, they themselves efface it by going to range themselves round the true king. The tyrant, finding himself abandoned, goes and joins the general swarm. But these virtuous insects, who pique themselves upon all that concerns the honour of their king, conspire the ruin of this turbulent fellow; they rush upon him, tear him to pieces, trample him under foot, so that on the morrow he is found dead, strangled under the hive, with some of his accomplices."

It is evident that when two young mothers leave the old hive at the same time, the bees must make a choice; but it is difficult to ascertain what determines that choice. I cannot think it can be precisely the gold which poets have discovered on her person, and which humble prose must translate into a russet brown. There is nothing to prove that bees attach the same value to gold that we do.

The cock of La Fontaine preferred the smallest grain of millet to a pearl which he had found. I do not know why La Fontaine seems to blame him by the introduction of the second apologue.

I do not perceive that yellow birds enjoy greater consideration among other birds. The golden-crested regulus, so called by men because it has on its head a tuft of orange-coloured feathers, does not appear to have succeeded in getting its royalty acknowledged among the other inhabitants of the air. But nevertheless the poets and others have only been deceived in the explanation they have given of the preference of the swarm for one of the two young queens. It is true, that in general the young bees, in this case, decide in favour of the redder of the two mother bees. It is true that the one that is first abandoned, and then put to death, is of a darker colour; but there is no necessity for attributing these two so different fates to the various virtues of the first, or the hideous vices of the second, nor even to her having a great belly. I mentioned, not far back, that young bees are brown, and that they become red as they grow old. I have likewise told you, that at their birth their bellies were larger than they would be afterwards. The preference of the bees is

simply for that one of the two queens which is the elder, and who, consequently, has become in a state to prove a mother before her departure from the hive, because she alone promises them with certainty that which is the sole cause of their labours, the sole motives of their zeal. The crimes of the queen are simply her youth and her maiden condition.

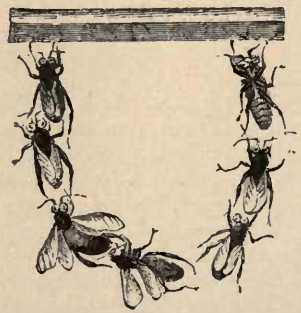
"Ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere."

If she is killed, if all those born at the same time are massacred in the old hive, it is because bees are not progressive, and have not yet imagined a constitutional government and the balance of power, which, if it were not achieved, would only arrive in its highest point of perfection in immobility.

The government of the bees, I must admit, has with reason been represented as a model of the best monarchy that can possibly exist; but it was very wrong to give them laws and a code, judges, advocates, and gend'armes.

What constitutes the excellence of this government is, that the bees have none of these, and that they don't want them, because every one has its part to play, and never dreams of playing another; because workers never think of becoming drones, and drones never intrigue to be above queens.

Whilst human societies are constantly full of perturbations and misery, they form a concert, in which each instrument wishes to make itself heard above the rest, and in which no one will confine himself to his own part, which must produce, and does in fact produce, a glorious *charivari*.



LETTER XXXI.

VIRGIL AGAIN—THE HYACINTH—THE LARKSPUR.

IT is unfortunate that I have not my young savant here.

There are, in one of the Eclogues of Virgil—the third, if I am not mistaken—some enigmas which two shepherds propose to each other:

> "Dic quibus in terris . . .
> Tres pateat cœli spatium non amplius ulnas."

To which the other replies, without guessing the enigma:

> "Dic quibus in terris inscripti nomina regum
> Nascuntur flores."

"Say, in what country do flowers grow with the names of kings written upon them."

The commentators of Virgil, and the professors after them,

take upon themselves to explain these two enigmas. The answer to the first, they say, is a well, in the bottom of which we may behold the reflection of the heavens.

"Tres non amplius ulnas."

This is quite as likely to be a loophole or a chimney, particularly when we remember how the chimneys of the ancients were built; but the commentators and professors have decided that it is a well. As regards the second, these said commentators and professors are not all of one mind. Some say that it is the hyacinth. But let them speak for themselves:

"Ajax, the son of Telamon and Hesione, after Achilles, the most valiant captain of the Greeks, being one day engaged in combat with the renowned Hector, night alone separated them, when they exchanged presents, which proved unfortunate to both; for Hector, when dead, was dragged round Troy by Achilles, by the baldrick which Ajax had given him, and Ajax killed himself with the sword presented to him by Hector; because, when disputing with Ulysses the arms of the deceased Achilles, the Prince of Ithaca obtained them by the decision of the Greeks; and the policy and good counsels of Ulysses were preferred to the courage of the other, which threw Ajax into such a fury, that he vented it by killing all the cattle he met with, imagining them to be the Greek princes and Ulysses. But perceiving his error, he plunged his sword into his own body, the blood of which gave birth to this flower, previously stained with that of Hyacinthus, and which still bears *ai*, the first two letters of his name, imprinted on its leaves."

But Ovid says, that the hyacinth sprang from the blood of a young man beloved by Apollo, whom the god killed by accident, whilst playing with him at quoits; and that the flower bare the epitaph of the young man, IA; that is to say, Hyacinthus, or AI, which is *Alas!*

I declare that, with the best will possible—that is to say, I am quite ready to admit that *ia* means "hyacinthus," or *ai* means "alas!"—I have never been able to find these two letters upon any hyacinth in my life. I must likewise add, that I have been equally unsuccessful in my endeavours to find

A I A; indeed, I was less likely to make out that inscription, as there is one letter more, and I never could find any at all. That, then, is not the flower *upon which the names of kings are written;* and besides, if there were IA, or AI, or even A I A, it would not be Ajax; since the flower, before him, belonged to Hyacinthus, and really I don't think there is room for both on one flower.

Other commentators say, that it was not into a hyacinth that the blood of Ajax was changed; but into a *Larkspur, Delphinium,* a flower upon which, say they, we may read the letters AIA, and which the botanists consequently term *Delphinium Ajacis.*

Now, errors cannot be too soon corrected, or, violated truth too promptly reestablished. It is evident, there are no letters upon the hyacinth. Let us examine then the flowers of the delphinium. I declare again that, being disposed to translate AIA in any way, by *the son of Telamon,* if agreeable to the commentators, I have sought anxiously and closely in the flowers of the larkspur of several varieties, and I have never been able to trace a single one of the three letters named, read, and announced by the learned.

I remember with admiration, that one day a professor dressed in a black robe, from his lofty desk, and with one of those knitted brows upon which *Pedant* is more plainly written than *Ajax* upon the delphinium, explained to us these idle stories with his most grave and majestic air; and that I was severely punished for being caught making little ducks of paper under which I placed flies, and so set them going, which was treated as a childish and futile amusement, in comparison with the important matters which were being taught to the class; that is to say, the enigma of the Well and the Larkspur. Now, I to this day maintain that my little ducks were much more ingenious playthings than the professor's; and that, as regards futilities, those that amuse have an immense advantage over the others, with whatever seriousness and pretension they may be put forth.

I can easily pardon the larkspurs this deficiency, out of gratitude for the magnificent shade of blue which some varieties of these flowers display.

The larkspur with simple flowers, but still better that

with double blossoms, is of the most beautiful blue that can be beheld, and the more beautiful, because we cannot imagine it without seeing it.

To the delphiniums has likewise been attributed the quality of closing wounds: it is doubtless to the same delphinium that was formerly Ajax, that this virtue must be assigned. The others have it not in any way;—but, for my part, I should never think of requiring anything else of a flower which is of such a beautiful blue.

Silkworm on the Mulberry.

LETTER XXXII.

FALSE GODS.

When I admire certain flowers produced by bulbs, and when I reflect upon the things which men of all times and all countries have worshipped and still do worship, I really have not the courage to think the Egyptians very unreasonable in their adoration of flowers.

Here is a god I have just had sent to me; it is a piece of chipped wood—it is an Indian god. I cannot think it gains much in comparison with a hyacinth or a tulip.

But without speaking of wooden gods or stone gods, without speaking of amulets worn to avert destinies, and a thousand similar childish superstitions, don't we see all the world worshipping money? And let it not be objected, that it is not money that is worshipped, but the pleasures of which it is the representative; all that can be procured in exchange for it. I answer, that there is nobody who is not acquainted

with some rich, insolent, ugly, stupid, avaricious man, to whom everybody listens when it pleases him to utter a stupidity; who is warmly welcomed in every house which he honours with his presence, whose opinion is never contradicted, except with the greatest caution, and all sorts of excuses. Why, there is not even the pretence of avarice or cupidity in the homages rendered to this man;—he has been tried, and every one knows nothing is to be hoped for from him—he never gives away anything. No, it is his money, to which he is a kind of saddle-bag, that they admire, that they adore, and to which all these homages, or rather these basenesses are offered up.

We worship glory, particularly military glory, which consists in killing without hating, without a motive, the greatest possible number of men born under another sky, and that under such singular conditions, that if to-morrow this country yields, after having been sufficiently ravaged, it becomes a crime punishable by law, by honour, and by universal contempt, to kill a single one of its inhabitants whom it was so glorious to massacre yesterday.

Places! You see people rich enough to live in abundance, in quiet and even in enjoyment, eagerly seeking a sort of domesticity, a certain rank, called *place;* and believe themselves happy and indebted to heaven in fervent thanks, if they are sufficiently favoured to succeed in obtaining one of these places, which requires of them a compulsory costume, a forced residence, necessary occupations, indispensable cares, subjection at all hours, and an incessant responsibility in exchange for sweet liberty!

Besides these you have titles! The man who has obtained a legal right to place three or four certain letters before his name, instantly becomes a sort of idol which is adored, and which ardently adores itself.

And red; the love of red, the adoration of red, the red so much beloved by savages and children; that gaudy colour —what will a man not do to have the right of wearing in his coat a piece of red ribbon; particularly if, after having for some time tied it in a simple knot, the heads of the state authorize him to wear it in the form of a rosette! He feels himself another man; he is a god, and believes in himself!

Oh! my beautiful hyacinth roots, my beautiful tulip bulbs, my beautiful tuberose and jonquil roots!—my beautiful squill and pancratium bulbs—my beautiful crocus and saffron bulbs! oh, my beautiful bulbs of tiger-lilies, gladiolus and amaryllis!—my beautiful bulbs of soft or brilliant colours, pure or harmonious—my beautiful bulbs of sweet and intoxicating perfumes! My beautiful bulbs; what amends do you make me for the want of all this, and how much greater gods are you than all these idols! Have pity on them.

The flower of the narcissus was formerly, say the ancient poets, a young man, the son of the river Cephisus, who pined away to death from love of his own attractions. Now, I never found the least charm in these fables which force man into everything. I love women under trees, but I don't like them *in* trees, like the hamadryades. All these metamorphoses of men and women into trees and flowers, are in my eyes cold and insipid fancies. Trees and flowers have their own particular existence, their own particular charms; one of which—frequently not the least—is to fly to the midst of them and forget men.

Lucian complains of these fables. "When," says he, "I heard in my youth, that on the banks of the Eridanus grew trees from which amber flowed, and that this amber was the tears of the sisters of Phaëton, who had been changed into poplars, and still wept his misfortune, I had a great desire to see all this; but, as I was afterwards sailing on this river, seeing none of these trees on the shore, I asked the sailors when we should come to those places which are so famous among the poets, and they began to laugh at my ignorance, and were astonished that such falsehoods should be promulgated; they were acquainted with neither Phaëton nor his sisters, and told me that if there were in this country any trees that produced a resin as precious as amber, they would not amuse themselves in hauling ropes or tugging at oars. This rendered me ashamed of having been imposed upon by the poets—and I regretted these things as if I had lost them.

"I also expected to hear the swans of this river sing, having learnt that the King of Liguria, a friend of Phaëton, and changed into a swan at his death, had preserved a melodious voice; but this proved to be not less false than the rest.

And when I inquired of the same people, they told me that swans were sometimes met with upon the Eridanus; but that their song, or rather cry, was not more agreeable than that of other aquatic birds." But, let us return to the Narcissus. Every one is agreed, we must understand him who was formerly son of the river Cephisus, to be Narcissus of the poets. This narcissus is white, with a little exterior yellow and red crown or circle, producing a charming effect.

Virgil says the narcissus is red :—

"Pro purpureo Narcisso."

But Ovid, who describes the metamorphosis, says it is yellow surrounded with white leaves, which is not dissimilar to the narcissus we are acquainted with.

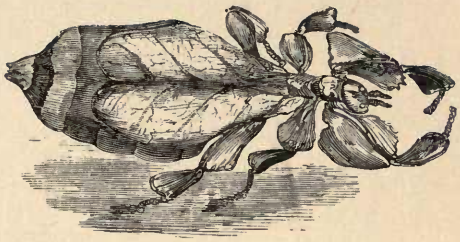
"Croceum florem
Foliis medium cingentibus albis."

Crowns of narcissus were twined in honour of the infernal gods, and placed upon the heads of the dead.

A long time before this narcissus, the yellow narcissus blooms in the still shadeless woods, at about the same time with the earliest violets, or rather a little before them.

A sort of fly, very much resembling a drone, burrows in the earth, at a certain period of the year, at the foot of a tuft of narcissus; when, by a subterranean gallery, it has reached the bulb, it deposits an egg in it by means of its wimble; after which it comes out again from the gallery, and resumes its flight. From this egg will issue a worm, which will feed upon the bulb till it shall become a fly similar to that which has just laid it.

I don't know whether the Egyptians were acquainted with this fly, or if they held in sufficient horror so impious an insect, which at the same time eats a god and makes a retreat and an asylum of him.



LETTER XXXIII.

THE MANTIS—THE ORCHIS—THE GALL INSECT—COCHINEAL—VALUE OF SCARLET.

We have seen an insect, which we took for a little parcel of dried leaves; it is the mantis, or the leaf insect, which resembles a branch with two green leaves. There is a little plant which springs up in the grass to a height of five or six inches; its stalk is surmounted by a pink flower. But what insect is that, with its head buried in the nectary of the flower, and which appears to be feasting with such perseverance that it is quite motionless?

Don't be afraid of frightening it, it won't fly away; it won't go away, unless it be in a month, in which it fades; for that insect is a flower; for it is but the under part of these three lilac petals which surmount it. The form, the colour, everything is perfectly imitated, it is the same mixture of yellow and brown. You would not dare to touch it, for fear of being stung by it.

This flower, which is almost a fly—this insect, which blooms and comes from a seed instead of issuing from an egg—this flower, which we may fancy we hear buzz, and upon which bees will not light, believing it to be occupied by a fly; this fly is called Bee Orchis.

We find upon the branch of a peach-tree a sort of tuberosity which appears to be a gall of the tree produced by the puncture of some insect. It is an insect perfectly alive. At first it was like a flat roundish spot which progressed over the leaves. The branches would then have been too difficult of digestion for it: it fell with the leaves in the autumn. Then it had a long voyage to make, for till that period its journeys over the leaves had been confined during five months to a surface about the size of a sixpence.

Now that it has acquired strength, and is as large as a grain of millet seed, it must quit the dry and fallen leaf, and ascend the tree till it meets with a branch of the preceding year's growth. It has five months to perform this journey in; it may be done, but it must not stop to amuse itself on the road.

The journey once completed, it will repose after it for the rest of its life; it will fasten itself to a young branch, and not only will it never leave it again, but still further, it will never quit the point of the branch upon which it has established itself. It grows—that is its mission, that is its duty. When it has become as large as a pea, there comes a most singular little fly, of a deep red, with two wings twice as long as its body; these wings are of an opaque white, ornamented on the outward side by a rich carmine band. These little flies are the males of the animated tuberosities.

Among these insects may be seen that which the Romans required of women, carried to the highest degree:—

"Lanam fecit, domum servavit."
"She spun her wool, and kept her house."

Whilst the male, small, rakish, richly clothed in purple, flies about at hazard, the female, scarcely living, taken for a gall of the tree, for a swelling of a leaf or of a branch, remains motionless, and waits for her husband. The male, who is singularly small in comparison with the gall-insect, walks over her, surveys her all over, for she is for him a sufficiently large track; he examines her from north to south, from east to west, and it is not till he is fatigued with running about over his beloved object that he risks the avowal of his flame,

after which, flying once or twice round his beloved, he departs. The wife, from that moment, thinks of nothing but the numerous family she has to bring into the world—about two thousand children. She begins to lay, and her eggs all come enveloped in a sort of cotton: *Lanam fecit*—She has spun her wool.

Then the gall-insect changes its form; its belly flattens, and becomes so thin that it joins the back; which forms a hollow space under it, in which are its eggs. Its back hardens, the belly and the back are quite confounded, the gall-insect withers, dies, and becomes a dwelling-place for its young ones. This is better than the *domum servavit;* she does not remain in the house, she becomes the house itself.

At the end of twelve days the young insects, as well those which are to become round spots as those that will be little brown flies, feel a desire to quit home and their mother, which are for them one and the same thing. The little gall-insects, which the eye cannot then distinguish without the assistance of a microscope, wish to come out from that chamber which has been their mother; nature has foreseen this want, and has left a window in this mother by which the young insects escape, and go to fix themselves upon leaves, as we found them at the commencement of our account.

Many savants for a long time took these insects for galls, that is to say, for excrescences formed by the puncture in which certain insects lay their eggs in the thickness of certain leaves and certain branches.

Some insects seem to partake the error of the savants. Ichneumons lay their eggs in the body of that insect, and the young ichneumons come out later, but not as the proper young ones do; they bore holes through this motionless mother, and are born by violence.

The scarlet-grain of Poland, kermes and cochineal, which are used for dyeing red, are insects of this kind.

I burn, my friend, to know what account you will oppose to this, you who have travelled so far; I defy you even to venture a falsehood so extraordinary as this truth which I have just exhibited to you. I in vain recal to my mind all the voyages I have read; I find in them always the same custom as we see here. The women place rings in their noses

instead of their ears as ours do ; they adorn their heads with the feathers of the parroquet instead of those of the ostrich. They are rather naked below, which appears indecent to European ladies, who only expose the upper half of *their* persons.

The men are proud of one or two cloves which they are allowed to wear on account of their great actions. We laugh heartily at this, we Europeans do. Cloves!—to have their arms and their legs broken for two or three cloves!—Really, savages are droll creatures! Well now, we, when we expose ourselves to fire and sword, we know what we are about, we who are white, we who are enlightened and civilized. Well! let them offer us cloves, would they be well received? No, no, we are allowed to wear in a button-hole of our coat a little bit of red riband; at a later period, perhaps, we may tie it in a rosette, but everybody does not attain *that* honour.

Still further, my friend, there is a great difference which I have observed between the men of the different countries of which I have read accounts in voyages. In France, for instance, most men are ready to do anything for gold, for *louis*. With these round pieces you can buy anything, even that which ought not to be bought or sold. In England this is not so; see what it is to travel! everything is to be bought with guineas and sovereigns. In Spain, on the contrary, it is with reals; in Italy, with ducats; in certain isles of America, the same things are sold to you, but in return for certain shells, whilst on the coast of Africa it is for gold-dust. It is true that it is in all cases for money, and that the provisions that are sold are the same, since *money*, in whatever shape is *every thing*, without exception.

LETTER XXXIV.

THE LITTLE CAUSES OF GREAT EVENTS—THE FRAXINELLA—THE NIGELLA—PINKS.

I DON'T know whether you have observed, as I have, the useful power which small things derive from their littleness itself; perhaps you have not on so many occasions been overcome by them as I have.

In order to become acquainted with his strength, a man should have to contend with something almost impossible to be conquered.

Little things do everything and undo everything; they pass across everything and over everything; no one is on his guard against them, and they always end by hitting you.

People who write history strive in vain to find great causes for events, and to prove the premeditation of the tiles which fall upon the head of the world. There is a crowd of small habits against which we struggle at an immense disadvantage, and over which I have never seen a victory obtained. The Cardinal de Retz, great-grand-uncle of the Coadjutor, kept during three years his horses, his hounds, and his hunting appointments at Noisy, near Versailles, saying every day, I will go there to-morrow. And he never went there.

There is a deep pool very near us, in which it is said there are eels; do you remember that during a month we said every evening, Well, we will go to-morrow, and lay some lines in that pool? We passed before it four times a-day, and yet you know that you went away without carrying our purpose into effect, and I have never thought of it since.

It is fifteen years ago since I failed in making a curious experiment, of which you, perhaps, have heard: it was with the Fraxinella.

The fraxinella is a beautiful plant which I met with in a corner of my garden; from the centre of a tufted and shining foliage, it throws out a large spike of flowers, rose-coloured or white, according to the variety.

I have frequently heard it said that from the vesicles which cover it there escapes a sort of gas or volatile oil, that this gas produces a kind of inflammable atmosphere, which takes fire if a taper be brought near it in hot weather, and forms around the plant a luminous glory not at all injurious to it.

I have frequently determined to satisfy myself with my own eyes of the truth of this assertion, but have hitherto let all opportunities slip; I will try to think of it this evening.

The Nigella of Damascus is a flower of a beautiful pale blue, which blooms all enveloped in a green foliage, cut as finely as hairs, which has procured it the name of *Venus's hairs;* it is a charming plant, and multiplies itself to a great extent in gardens where it is once introduced. The Orientals make great use of its seeds for all sorts of seasoning.

When the regular period arrives, the bride, surrounded by more than a dozen bridegrooms, would appear to you to be a little embarrassed between those beautiful curtains of blue silk and green gauze; she is taller than they are; it scarcely

seems possible for their caresses to reach her. Melancholy grandeur! annoying elevation!

The blossoms of the rue are in nearly the same position; but they have only one difficulty to triumph over; the stamens, the lovers, are only bent down to a distance from the object of their love; they have the power of raising themselves up towards her, and afterwards drop again. The little nymph who dwells in the Nigella has less dignity. Besides, she might always wait, and see her lovers fade away and die, without their having been able to evince anything more than a respectful attention: it is not their position, but their stature, which prevents their reaching her.

This nymph is like other nymphs; she flies, but she is desirous of being seen to fly, and has no great objection to be pursued.

She would wait patiently if they could come, but she knows that this haughty indifference would be taken as earnest.

At court, princesses invite the men to dance, whilst the latter invite other ladies. Queens and princesses who indulge in lovers are obliged to descend the few steps from the throne which love would not dare to mount.

Now this is exactly what the nymph of the nigella does.

Her eager lovers in vain attempt to reach her; they only arrive within two-thirds of the five points which terminate her. At first she appears to take no notice of their efforts: she knows that the moment is not come. The anthers, those little masses which bear the pollen, change from green, as they were, to a pale yellow. We have reason to suppose she then finds them more handsome or more touching, for at that moment she lowers her five arms towards her lovers.

Then her rich blue vestment fades and falls, and her lovers disappear at the same time. Left alone amidst its green hair, the ovary grows, swells, and becomes a sort of capsule, of a brownish-green, in which are contained the seeds which are to reproduce the plant.

At the top of a high stalk, which springs from a foliage likewise very much cut, a long spike of flowers, in the form of a helmet, balances itself. It is the Aconite, which sprang, they say, from the foam of Cerberus. This was a poison

much used by the ancients: arrows were poisoned with it, and wives and husbands, tired of each other's company, introduced it into little delicate tempting dishes of all sorts.

It appears, however, that it was but a vulgar poison, and was seldom or never used by persons of rank;—something like what arsenic is now;—arsenic, which, for years past, has been a substitute for *divorce*. When the object was to make the Emperor Claudius exchange his earthly crown for an apotheosis, he was poisoned with mushrooms, which caused them to be called at Rome, *a dish for the gods*.

We were just now speaking of that disagreeably smelling plant, *rue;* it is recalled to my mind by speaking of poison. Rue was for a long time considered a very powerful antidote, and it is asserted that the famous counter-poison of Mithridates, King of Pontus, was composed of nothing but twenty leaves of rue pounded with two dried walnuts, two figs, and a little salt.

Rue entered into the composition of the famous vinegar of the four thieves. It is said that four thieves, at the time of the Plague of Marseilles, invented this anti-pestilential vinegar, by means of which they entered infected houses without danger, and took away all property worth the conveyance. Perhaps the four thieves did nothing in this case but invent a story which enabled them to sell their vinegar at a high price.

A vinegar for the plague was likewise made of pinks, but whatever may be the efficacy attributed to it, I fancy it would be better to leave the pink out of the composition than to leave out the vinegar.

The pink is one of the flowers deemed worthy to be called flowers by the amateurs. I have read in an old book a magnificent eulogy of the pink: it was there I found the receipt for pink vinegar against the plague.

In this book, the pink is praised for not having thorns like the rose. "The water distilled from pinks," adds the author, "is an excellent remedy against epilepsy; but if a conserve be composed of it, it is the life and delight of the human race." The author gives receipts in his book for making pinks bloom blue or green, a thing which is not seen now, and is not practicable.

He makes a magnificent picture of the manner in which he cultivates his pinks; he does not put them into earthen pots; he does not support their branches with osier twigs or strips of deal; he puts them into ivory boxes, and fastens their stalks to black wands by means of silver rings.

The amateurs whose collections I have seen are far from surrounding their pinks with similar luxury. Upon each of the little osier sticks that serve as tutors to the pinks, they place old broken pipes and lobsters' claws. I assure you that at the first glance a collection of pinks is not a pretty sight. These old pipes and lobsters' claws are not placed there solely for ornament; perhaps even no idea of elegance or adornment formed part of the reason for using them. The great enemy of pinks is the *forficula auricularia*, better known by the name of *earwig*. The pipes and the claws are the traps, the harbours offered to it, and in which it is surprised without any suspicion of danger.

LETTER XXXV.

THE ENRICHED WOODMAN.

For some short time past, a circumstance that appeared strange has attracted my attention. I dare say you remember my speaking to you of a house covered with thatch, of the thatch covered with moss, of the ridge of the roof crowned with iris, which was to be seen from a certain point in my garden. Well, for several days I perceived the house was shut up, and I asked my servant, "Does not the woodman live up yonder now?"

"No, Sir, he has been gone nearly two months. He is become rich; he has inherited a property of 600 livres a year; and he is gone to live in town."

He is become rich!

That is to say, that with his 600 livres a-year, he is gone to live in a little apartment in the city, without air and without sun, where he can neither see the heavens, nor the trees, nor the verdure, where he will breathe unwholesome air, where

his prospect will be confined to a paper of a dirty yellow, embellished with chocolate arabesques.

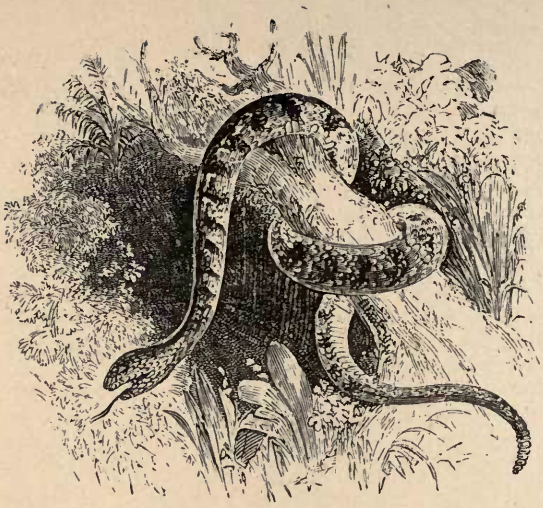
He is become rich!

He is become rich! that is to say, he is not allowed to keep his dog which he has had so long, because it annoyed the other lodgers of the house.

He lodges in a sort of square box; he has people on the right hand and on the left, above him and below him.

He has left his beautiful cottage and his beautiful trees, and his sun, and his grass carpet so green, and the song of the birds and the odour of the oaks. He is become rich!

He is become rich!—Poor man!



LETTER XXXVI.

FENNEL—THE ENCROACHING VISITOR.

FENNEL grows to the height of six feet, with branches of bright green, and leaves so minute and numerous as to make it resemble an ostrich feather.

Pliny pretends that serpents are particularly partial to this plant, and that they have good reasons for being so. It restores them to youth, and recovers their dimmed sight, which is for them a matter of great importance, if we are to believe, as certain naturalists assert, that the serpent fascinates various reptiles and even birds with its look, and forces them to come to it by an invincible magnetic power.

Physicians, for a long time, applied the roots of fennel pounded with honey to the bites of mad dogs. At the end of three or four hundred years it was discovered that this had never cured anybody.

As handsome in its appearance and yielding a much more agreeable odour, the Angelica grows on the banks of rivulets. The Angelica serves as an asylum and as food for the caterpillar of the beautiful butterfly, called *Machaon.**

* *Papilio Machaon.* The swallow-tail.

The sun has disappeared behind the high trees some minutes since, so that I should not have recognised the fennel and the Angelica if I had not been pretty well acquainted with them. The weather is hot and close: this is a capital opportunity for testing the phenomenon of the fraxinella.

"Varaï, bring me a taper."

"Monsieur, there is somebody knocking at the garden-gate."

"Give me the taper then, and go and open it."

"Monsieur, I have lit the taper twice, and twice the wind has extinguished it. Only hear how they are knocking!"

In fact, somebody did knock—almost enough to break the gate down.

"Varaï, go and open it, pray." A man presents himself, whom at first I did not recognise.

"Well, Stephen, my good fellow, what a while it is since I have seen thee! I am going to ———, and I could not pass so near thy hermitage without passing a few days with thee."

Only at this moment I recognised Edmond. You know, my dear friend, or else you do not know, what Edmond I mean. Perhaps, like me, it would be necessary for you to have him before your eyes to remember that he exists. He had never taken the liberty to *tutoyer* me in his life.* I remember that he once borrowed a few livres of me, of which he never said anything since. Nevertheless, he gave his valise to my servant, and said, "Thingummy! What's your name? Pay the coachman, and give him something to drink. Ah! by-the-bye, Stephen, I can't think why thou dost not get the road put to rights that leads hither, that is, if thou canst call it a road; it's enough to break one's back. Fortunately, I have not my horses here. I have left them at the top of the hill. Hast thou dined?"

I had been for some time endeavouring to recover from the stupor into which this arrival or rather this invasion had plunged me, and I racked my invention for a sentence in which there should be neither a *thou* nor a *you*, not being

* We scarcely need remind our readers that the French reserve *thee* and *thou* for relatives, intimate friends, or persons they highly value. It is so completely a national custom, that in translating this scene it is impossible to find a substitute or an equivalent for it.—TRANS.

willing that the said Edmond should force me to *tutoyer* him, and being equally unwilling to offend him by not thee and thouing him after he had made use of that mode of speaking towards me, which would have appeared to me equivalent to withholding your hand from a person who stretches out his to you, an insult that can only be caused by a deep resentment. I thought I had discovered a sentence.

"Yes, but I have not supped."

"Ah! thou suppest, dost thou? Well, come, that is not too savage; I shall find thee better than thou art reputed to be. I am dying with hunger."

I made a signal to Varaï to get supper ready, and we went into the dining room. The cloth was soon laid. Edmond poured himself out two glasses of wine successively. "What wine is this?—Bordeaux?—Dost thou like Bordeaux?—Hast thou no Burgundy?"

Shall I confess, my friend, that I felt myself blush whilst humbly stammering that I had but one sort of wine? And I must tell you all, I was very near making an excuse, by saying that my wine-merchants had disappointed me, or some other such subterfuge as is employed by people in my situation.

"Why didst thou have thy dining-room of this dark-coloured wood? I have a charming one; it is all in white stucco."

"That must be very handsome."

"It is magnificent. Upon a mahogany sideboard are Bohemian crystals of the greatest richness."

At this moment I heard in the garden a noise like that made by a wild deer followed by her fawn, when roused from a thicket.

"What *can* that be in the garden?"

"Ah! cried Edmond, I'll lay a wager it is Phanor."

"What is Phanor?"

"A superb *pointer*, an English dog."

"But he is ruining my garden!"

I rose in haste. Edmond followed me after finishing what was in his plate, saying, partly to himself, "It's very astonishing! he generally keeps to the walks." When we gained the garden, we could hear a wild chase across the masses of

flowers; a cat appeared first, followed by a great dog, which Edmond called to in vain; the cat dashed into another clump of flowers, and Phanor followed closely at her heels.

"Ah! I'm not astonished at it now; he can't bear cats. Phanor! Phanor! here, Sir!"

The cat jumped over a wall. Phanor sat, eagerly looking after her, at the bottom of it. At length he obeyed the voice of his master; but as he found he had a good chance of being beaten, he slunk back, and ran away.

"In the name of heaven, Edmond, lay hold of your dog, he will break my best rose-trees."

"Phanor! come here!"

"But if you show him your cane, he will not come."

"Ay, but he *must be made to come.* Phanor, here! Phanor, here!"

"Don't threaten him—call him."

"I must correct him here on the spot. Come here, Phanor!"

"Well, but correct him when you have got hold of him."

"No, no; he must come in obedience to the cane. Oh, I never let dogs have their own way. Phanor! Phanor, here!"

The dog took a few steps towards his master, but on seeing the cane, again set off. Edmond, in a rage, threw his cane at the dog, which missed him, but knocked off the head of a lily in bloom. Edmond now pursued the dog exactly as the dog pursued the cat some minutes before; both trampling as if in emulation of each other, upon my most beautiful plants. At length, Varaï seized the dog in his passage and held him fast. Edmond rushed towards a tree and tore off a large branch.

"Oh, my Toussaint cherry-tree, which ripens its cherries in October!"

He beat his dog with the finest branch of my cherry-tree.

"Ah, master Phanor! I'll teach you to destroy gardens!"

The evil was done and was irreparable; I demanded grace for Phanor, if it were only for the sake of not hearing him cry. Besides, the branch of the cherry-tree was broken on Phanor's back, and I did not know what tree Edmond would apply to next for a weapon. "Come, come, Edmond, don't

beat him any more, the evil is done; besides, it may not be so serious as you imagine."

"Oh! it's not for the few nonsensical bunches of flowers he may have destroyed, my dear Stephen; it is because he disobeyed me that I correct him."

"Well, then, I beg you, Edmond, do not flog him any more!"

"Let him alone, let him alone; I want to see if he will obey me now."

"I ask it as a favour, that you will not make the experiment."

"Phanor, here! Thou shalt see that he will obey now. Here, Phanor! Why, here! Phanor!—here! here! here!"

Phanor takes to flight once more, Edmond pursues him afresh, and the chase becomes as warm as ever through my shrubs and flowers.

Varaï picked up the gentleman's cane, and held it ready to give to him when he wanted to beat his dog, for fear he should borrow another from one of my trees. But Varaï was more ingenious than I was; he opened the garden-gate, and Phanor, as he passed near it, closely pursued by his master, perceived the chance, made a bolt, and disappeared. Edmond and I returned to the dining-room.

"It is astounding," said he, "a dog who obeys at the least sign! Well, come, we must make the best of it; let us resume our supper. Thou shalt see how I will make up for lost time. But, shouldst thou not send some one to look for Phanor? I am afraid he will be lost in this country of wolves, where he has never been before."

"Edmond, Varaï is the only servant I have, and if he goes to look for Phanor, we shall have no supper. We will think of him presently."

"Ah! but I hope he won't be lost though!"

We resumed our repast. After Varaï had, as usual, handed me some wine and water, he offered some to Edmond. "No, thank you! no, thank you, my man of colour, I never drink water.

"'All the wicked are drinkers of water,
As is well proved by the deluge.'

Give me a little of that omelette. Hum! this is an

omelette aux herbes! Now, dost thou know how *I* like an omelette? The one that is good, really good, is an omelette aux truffes! that's what I call an omelette! The table service is not bad: I made myself a present the other day of a pretty service in vermeil; one cannot have anything but vermeil, now porters eat out of silver."

All the supper-time this was the nature of his talk; and, to my great joy, as soon as the meal was over, he complained of being fatigued, and requested to be conducted to his chamber. Varaï was soon back; Mr. Edmond wanted another candle, being accustomed to leave one burning; he could not endure darkness. Then Edmond wanted his bed warmed; then he must have some eau sucrée, in case of feeling thirsty in the night; then another blanket and an additional pillow; and the chimney must be stopped up, to keep out the air. At length he got into bed, and I quickly sought mine, for fear Varaï should ask me any questions about this gentleman, as that would only have increased my ill-humour.

He is come to pass a few days. What does he mean by a few days? Why did not I at once think of telling him I was under an engagement to set out to-morrow on a journey? Now it is too late.

The dog came back, was tied up, and passed the night in howling in such a horrible and melancholy manner as would affect the strongest nerves.

In the morning, when Varaï informed him that breakfast was ready, Edmond coolly replied, "he could not get up so early as that:" breakfast was put off an hour. When he came down, I asked him if he had heard his dog?

"Oh! yes," said he; "poor Phanor! it's only because he does not know the house; he will behave better in two or three days. Tell me, now, blackey, what have you given him to eat?"

"I got him some dog biscuit of a neighbour."

"Oh, that will never do; he must have some soup, and that made thick, mind. Poor Phanor! he is not accustomed to dog-biscuit—that's all very well for nigger dogs."

We went into the garden; Varaï brought us pipes. He condescended to take notice of a large cherry-tree pipe with its amber mouthpiece, of the size of an egg, and said, "Ay!

I have one with a mouthpiece twice as large as that. Thy garden is pretty, Stephen: it is not large, but it *is* pretty. Well, well, well, and so thou amusest thyself thus, eh? in cultivating flowers in this way, eh? Poor fellow! I have an uncle, now, just in the same way; he has a handsome garden, water, woods; I must bring Master Phanor into order before we go there: my uncle would not laugh if he played the same game in his garden that he played on his arrival here last night."

Whilst saying this, he plucked a rose and put it into his button-hole.

"What are you about there?"

"What am I about? why, I have gathered a middling sort of rose to wear in my button-hole."

"A middling rose! it is the last that tree will bear this year, the most beautiful of white roses, *Madame Hardy*. I hoped to see that for five or six days longer; I shall not see another for a year to come."

"Why, thou art worse than my uncle! Don't gather thy roses! Well, I won't touch another. What dost thou *do* here? How can we amuse ourselves?"

"We do not amuse ourselves here."

"Ah! well, never mind; I can read, I can walk. I suppose thou dost not keep a horse?"

"No."

"That's a pity."

Such is my present melancholy condition, my dear friend—when it will be over I cannot tell. I seek every justifiable means of getting rid of this intruder, but he does not even tell me *when* he means to go.

Two shots in the garden caused me to hasten to see what is going on.

LETTER XXXVII.

THE ENCROACHING VISITOR.

NOTHING less than my friend Edmond practising in the garden, and who had just killed a beautiful blackbird. This blackbird was, when alive, the leader of my band : I felt more sorrow than I will venture to tell you when I saw him lying on the ground, with his glossy black feathers stained with blood. All the cares I had taken for several years that the birds should find in my garden a sure and tranquil asylum were rendered abortive by this firing of the gun,—the more so from its appearing a kind of perfidy, a meditated murder. In every part of the neighbourhood, the trees are cut down, birds are taken in snares and traps, or shot with guns. Here alone I have preserved large trees and thick bushes ; here I have multiplied service and holly-trees with their coral berries, hawthorn with their garnet fruit, elders and privets, which bear umbels of black berries, the burning-bush with

spikes of fire-coloured berries, ivies whose fruits become black with frost, laurustines with dark-blue fruits, azerolias or small medlars covered with little red apples,—in order that they might find food in abundance during the whole winter. In certain parts of my rivulet, I have even lessened the depth that they may bathe without danger.

And how richly have all these cares been repaid! In winter, the redbreasts come and live in my greenhouse, and familiarly hop about in other parts of my dwelling. In summer, the linnets make their nests in the bushes, and the wrens in the angles of the walls. All allow themselves to be approached and to be seen; all seem to fly around me without flying away, and all fill my garden with enchanting music.

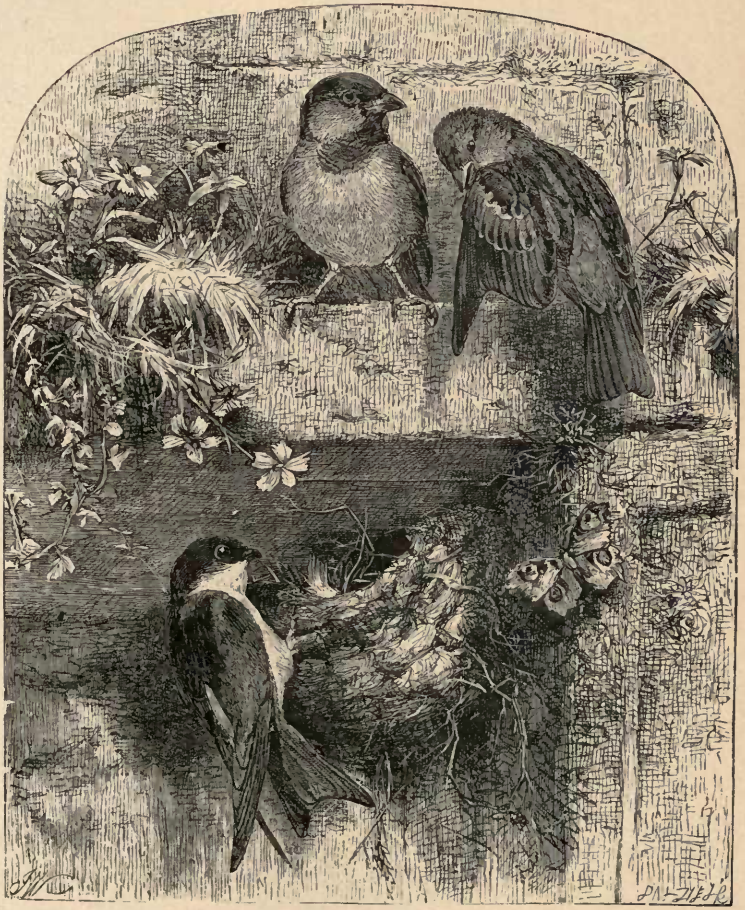
Instead of being seated, crammed into a theatre without fresh air, to hear for the hundredth time the same tenor, with the same apricot-coloured tunic and the same chocolate boots, sing the same air, accompanied by the same cries of admiration of people who wish to make part of the spectacle, I had three operas a day.

In the morning, at the break of day, the chaffinch warbled upon the highest branches of the trees, whilst the flowers open their corollas, whilst the rising sun tinted the heavens with rose and saffron.

Amidst the ardour of noontide heat, the male linnet, concealed beneath the shade of the linden-tree, raised his melodious voice, whilst his mate sat upon her eggs in her little nest of hair and grass.

But in the evening, when everything slept—when the stars sparkled in the heavens, when the moonbeams played through the trees, when the evening-primroses with their yellow cups exhaled a sweet perfume, when the glowworms twinkled in the grass, the nightingale raised its full and solemn voice, and sung throughout the night its religious and loving hymns!

And this Edmond comes with his gun to alarm, perhaps to send away all my musicians, to falsify my long and careful hospitality, which is now nothing more or less than treachery, since without it perhaps, without the confidence it had inspired, my poor blackbird would not have allowed any one to come near enough to him to make him so easy a victim.



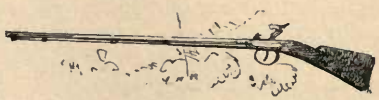
In the summer the Birds make their nests in the bushes, and in the angles of the wall.—P. 226.

What would I not have given to make all my birds, all my melodious guests, understand that it was not I who had made that report, it was not I that had committed that murder! to make them understand that they might come back, that I am not a traitor, that they will find peace and shade here again, that they may come in the winter without mistrust to feast upon the berries of my trees.

How is this all to be repaired?

That chaffinch, which yesterday came to my very window, will never come again; he will depart from me and from my house; next year he will not again build his nest in that great elm, in which he has been accustomed to build it every year.

I got as quickly to Edmond as I could, and entreated him to suspend his sport, and he laughed at me. I was obliged to say that I insisted upon having no guns fired in my garden. Edmond replied that I abused the circumstance of its being my garden. It appeared to me that the abuse was on his part. Nevertheless, his reproach hurt me. I left him in the garden, and shut myself up in my study. I then questioned myself whether he really was in the wrong; if hospitality did not impose duties, difficult, it is true, but sacred, and if I had fulfilled them? I inquired of myself what are the duties of hospitality. After serious examination, I did myself this justice, that, with the exception of washing his feet, as the ancient Hebrews did, I had performed, with respect to him, and in the most scrupulous manner, all the laws of hospitality. But still that reproach wounded me; he is in the wrong, but he believes that I abuse the circumstance of its being my garden; I have a great mind to go and ask his pardon!



LETTER XXXVIII.

WONDERS OF TRAVEL—SCIENTIFIC NOMENCLATURE.

THERE are many things which really astonish me in the accounts which have been given to me by a traveller who has been in China. Among them, in the Chinese language, the same word yé, which at Canton means *two*, at Pekin signifies no more than *one*.

You may think how much I was surprised to learn that there are men who shave their heads, preserving only a little bunch of hair, whilst I see here the streets full of people, who only shave their chins, leaving tufts of beard above or below the mouth, or upon their cheeks; in the same manner that I was astonished to hear that Indian women pierce their noses in order to suspend jewels from them, whilst our women have a practice, from superior civilization, no doubt, of piercing their ears for the same purpose.

He told me that the emperor was dressed in yellow, which appeared very singular to me who have been accustomed to see the king dressed in blue, green, or red.

Chinese mothers torture the feet of their children to prevent their growing; this punishment our women inflict upon themselves, with the only difference, that they arrive at results a little less monstrous. Few people are aware what tortures a French woman suffers, or with what courage she endures them, to lessen the size of her foot a line and a half! The Roman who burnt his hand over a brazier would have blenched if he had been put to a similar trial.

The literary men, the *savants*, let the nail of their little finger grow, which we have discontinued to do, but which was done in France at the time of Louis XIV., and was esteemed highly fashionable, as Molière tells us:—

"Est-ce par l'ongle long qu'il porte au petit doigt?"

But these are not all the wonders which he tells me he had seen in China. I will repeat some of them to you, though I know not whether you may not at the present moment be in the midst of the said wonders.

It appears that in China marriages have for their objects interest and money; that merchants try to sell things at more than their value; and that misers, idlers, ambitious men, and thieves are not uncommon.

Our traveller likewise observed that the emperor, as a mark of distinction, sometimes gives to those he wishes to favour a sort of yellow waistcoat, or a peacock's feather, whilst among us the favour of the master is manifested by a bit of red riband, or the privilege of writing before his name the two letters, D. E. He pretends that, in some provinces, corrupt governors sell honours and employments. He speaks of prevaricating and greedy ministers, of rich men, full of haughtiness and vanity.

He asserts that there is at Pekin a gazette in which are published exaggerated accounts, and even sometimes false assertions.

If I am not mistaken, the traveller told me, that among the Chinese, it is not uncommon to see some who fail in their promises, and others who disguise the truth.

Some, he says, are gamblers, some débauchees.

Among the women, there are more ugly than pretty, among the men, more fools than wits.

They eat beef, mutton, and rice.

Among the trees and plants which he has seen, he named *linden-trees, rose-laurels, camellias, peonies, mallows,* and a *magnolia* whose blossoms precede the leaves. As regards this last point, I don't feel a very anxious desire to go to China to see this magnolia, since it came to France to see me long ago, and I have three in my garden; but, it must be allowed that in China I should hear it called *you lan,* whilst here, I call it the precocious magnolia, and the learned designate it, *precox.*

Now, see if all this is worth the trouble of going to the antipodes for!

Our *savants,* since I have met with some, appear to me to be a more singular people than the Chinese; for they do not employ Latin and Greek so much for the purpose of understanding each other, as to prevent their being understood by other people, or at least the second object seems to be generally attended with more success than the first.

For a long time I have timidly meditated on putting to the learned a single and modest question, and every time I have been about to risk it, respect and veneration have stopped and intimidated me.

This is my question:—

Wherein would it be more criminal to give to French words a Latin and Greek termination, than a French termination to Greek and Latin words? What difference does there exist between these two operations?

If I obtain from the *savants* the only possible reasonable answer to these two questions, that is, that one is not more criminal than the other, and that the two operations are perfectly identical, I will ask accessorily why the learned do not call a cabriolet *cabrioletus, un mouton* (a sheep) *moutonus,* and *un hêtre* (a beech) hetrus?

Why, instead of saying that a plant is *polysperme,* do they not say that it is *many-seeded?* Why is a certain tree designated by them under the surname of *microphylle,* instead of little-leaf?

If I am told that little-leaf, many-seeded, cabrioletti, &c., &c., are frightful barbarisms, I will tell them that polysperme and microphylle are Greek words to which a French termination has been given, as well as to *plusieurs semençaa* a

Latin termination; declaring to them that it is impossible for me to perceive the difference which exists between these two processes, both equally barbarous and equally ridiculous.

I can perfectly comprehend that works of science are better written in a common and generally-taught language, like Latin or Greek, in order that they may not be confined to one country, but when they write them in the vulgar tongue, I cannot see why they should take the trouble to borrow from foreign languages words which exist in that which they employ.

Thus, why call the lupin with narrow leaves *lupin microphylle*, since *microphylle*, a Greek barbarism and a French barbarism, says nothing but—with narrow leaves? Why call a sort of Acacia *inerme*, instead of calling it thornless, which has the same sense, and has only the fault of being more clear? Why do you say that the *paquerette* (Easter daisy) is *humifuse*, instead of saying it is spread upon the earth? Why do you say that the elm has its leaves *scabres* instead of saying that its leaves are rough, &c.?

Why this useless and ridiculous mixture of these three unfortunate languages? Adopt one of them, speak it, write it, and only borrow from the others the words in which the one you have adopted is deficient.

Do not make for science the horrible thorns with which you surround the most beautiful and most graceful things.

LETTER XXXIX.

WILD FLOWERS IN GARDENS—THE SHOWER.

THERE are some beautiful villagers to whom I have given an asylum in my garden.

The *molena*, with its large leaves, covered with a white down, raises its long stalk, terminated in a spike of yellow flowers, by the road-side; it nourishes five or six lepidoptera (*vulgo*, butterflies) besides beetles.

There are many plants which seem thus to quit the fields to come and place themselves by the road-sides; curious and coquettish as they are, they are seldom met with anywhere else.

Near the molena, the *viperina* blows in the sun; its stalks variegated with green and brown, are loaded with little spikes which form one large one by their position. These little spikes have at the same time blue flowers at their base, and rose-coloured buds at their extremity.

In the same manner, in the road-sides, the foxglove throws

up its beautiful stem of rose-coloured flowers, tiger-spotted and white within, and hanging from one side to the height of four or five feet; but it is only on roads which are on the skirts of woods, in whose coolness and shade the plant delights.

Beautiful as it is, the digitalis is a dangerous plant; it exercises a singular influence over man; it impedes the circulation of the blood; no animal touches it.

I have assembled in my garden several of these nymphs of the fields and woods, and every year they blossom larger and grow more handsome.

One plant, which in the garden is generally of so dark a purple that it appears black pricked with white points, is called the scabious, or the widow's flower. In its wild state, it is of a pretty lilac, which would scarcely permit us to say it was in half-mourning.

Women, in fact, have thought proper to admit, as a mourning colour, one of the most fresh and charming of colours; lilac is the mourning of far-advanced grief—it is the transition from grey to rose-colour.

The invention of lilac for mourning is an invention analogous to that of teal, wild-duck, and moor-hen as fasting food for Lent; it is one of the numerous accommodations made daily with heaven as with ordinary evils.

The scabious enjoyed formerly a very enviable position in the world; it radically cured several more than disagreeable maladies, among which, not the least so, was the itch.

The devil, it is said, furious that this precious plant should thus thwart the operations of some of his ministers, took delight in biting off the extremity of its roots, in the hope of destroying it; and to convince the incredulous, this root is still shown with its extremity cut or broken off, at least in one of the varieties of the scabious. But it may be well imagined that the scabious, which cured others so well, had not much trouble in curing itself.

It appears that now-a-days the scabious is strangely fallen; that it no longer cures anything, and that it only serves as an asylum for three or four insects; at least we find these judgments pronounced against it in books of both ancient and modern medicine.

Since morning, the heavens have been concealed by thick

clouds, the air is heavy, and respiration is difficult. The birds have ceased to sing, the bees will not go beyond the garden walls; the flowers, half-faded, seem to languish on their stalks; swallows fly about, skimming the earth. A flash of lightning gleams from a black cloud, and is followed by a heavy, distant sound. The flashes soon become more frequent, the peals of thunder nearer: then the clouds burst, and the rain falls in torrents!

And then the freshened air deliciously dilates the lungs; the honeysuckles spread abroad their sweetish perfumes; the earth itself throws up a delightful odour; the rain has ceased, and the sun is bestowing the fires of diamonds upon the drops suspended from the leaves of the trees. Pardon me, beautiful drops of rain, for comparing you to diamonds!

The birds sing, the flowers resume their splendour, and lift up their heads. Everything is revived, fresh, smiling, happy!

LETTER XL.

AFTER THE SHOWER.

THE rain of yesterday evening still moistens the earth; I could introduce you to two or three nations such as I think you will not meet with in the course of your distant travels. I mean, snails, earthworms, toads, &c.; but there are particulars connected with their nature and habits with which I do not like to trust my pen, and therefore I must pass you over to naturalists with less modesty, and at the same time less imagination.

Among the perfumes which abound after the rain, no one can forget that which the bean exhales from its white blossoms spotted with black. They say in the country that it is not safe to pass by a field of beans in blossom, and that the

odour affects the brain. There is an old Latin verse which says so:—

"Cum faba florescit, stultorum copia crescit."

It would not be uninstructive to try to recollect what fits of folly I have been guilty of during my life at the bean-flowering season. It will be all the more easy for me to do so, from my having, for a length of time, been in the habit of writing down every evening the impressions of the day; that is the only means of thoroughly explaining both actions and thoughts.

June.

"How fortunate! I have succeeded. That kind M. d'Eloges has consented to take my note for 300 francs, in exchange for which he has given me a watch and 25 francs in money. I have sold my watch again for 40 francs. I am all right then, now. I can send my bouquet, and be at the theatre."

The beans were in blossom.

June.

"Can it then be true that age thus renders hearts cold? and is blindness of the mind, with some people, the result of years? And is that what is called experience?

"Here is an old friend who has just preached me a sermon three hours long. He pretends that I am wrong in making my happiness, my future, and my life, depend upon a woman and her caprices. I answered him that she whom I loved is not a woman, but an angel, and that a caprice was beneath both her heart and her understanding. I found I was soon obliged to give up the idea of making him renounce his opinion. There are sentiments that everybody cannot comprehend, and man is easily led to declare that that which he does not see does not exist, and that which he does not think is a folly.

"But I can say, there could not arise in my mind either a doubt or a fear, if all men united were to come and say to me: She is deceiving you, she will forget you, she will be false to her promises—I would not ask even herself to reassure me!

"No, no, I am sure of her and of her love. I could not

pardon myself a moment of uneasiness, it would be to offend Heaven, which has caused me to meet with her, and which has placed in her hands the happiness of my life. She expects me—she loves me. At the moment I write these notes she is thinking of me.

" Men, envy, destiny, are only able to delay my happiness.

" I believe in her without any restriction: I might go to the other extremity of the world, and after long years of absence, might fear to find her dead; but I never once should put this question to myself—Is she faithful?—Does she love me still?

The beans were in blossom.

" What a black, dismal malady is misanthropy! and what long and disheartening books it has inspired! *I have* friends, true friends, upon whom I can reckon as firmly as upon myself. They have frequently told me so, and I believe them.

" Oh! how sweet and smiling a thing is life! what pleasures it gives, what happinesses it promises!

" It is a delightful road upon which we love to walk, looking forward confidently into the blue mists of the horizon which veil the objects of our desires, and lingering among the blossom-covered trees by which it is bordered!

" How deliciously my heart was moved by the protestations of friendship made to me on leaving that dinner-party at which we sat so late! their arms, their swords, their purses, everything was at my service. Certainly I shall not abuse these generous offers, but it gives me much confidence to find that I have a place in such hearts!"

The beans were in blossom.

" I have just read the discourse of a statesman who complains bitterly of being dragged from the calm pleasures of private life, and the humble joys of his domestic hearth. But, says he, my country calls upon me, and I devote myself to its interests: I repair to the breach, ready to sacrifice to that dear country, my energies, my life, &c.

" Oh! leaders of nations, why do you not always follow such a noble example?"

The beans were in blossom.

" I arrived yesterday evening exhausted, but so happy!

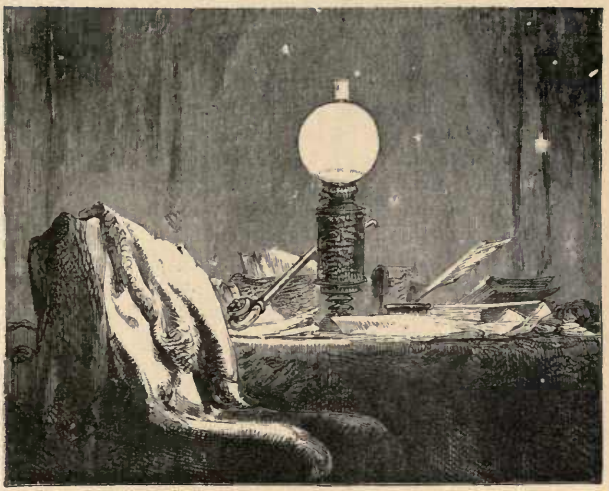
" I had walked eighteen leagues, but I knew that I should

be able to get a distant glance of her at the theatre. If it had been a hundred leagues I might have been more fatigued, but I am certain I should have accomplished the journey all the same, and have arrived in time. Whatever the obstacles may be that arise between her and me, I do not always perceive how I shall overcome them; but, what I am certain of is, that they will be overcome, that we shall be united, that she is mine as I am hers."

The beans were in full blossom.

But a truce to this cold-hearted pleasantry. No, it is not a folly to be under the empire of the most beautiful—the most noble feelings; it is no folly to feel oneself great, strong, invincible; it is not a folly to have a good, honest, and generous heart; it is no folly to be filled with good faith; it is not a folly to devote oneself for the good of others; it is not a folly to live thus out of real life.

No, no; that cold wisdom which pronounces so severe a judgment upon all it cannot do; that wisdom which owes its birth to the death of so many great, noble, and sweet things; that wisdom which only comes with infirmities, and which decorates them with such fine names—which calls decay of the powers of the stomach and loss of appetite sobriety; the cooling of the heart and the stagnation of the blood a return to reason; envious impotence, a disdain for futile things;—this wisdom would be the greatest, the most melancholy of follies, if it were not the commencement of the death of the heart and the senses.



LETTER XLI.

THE CLOTHES-MOTH — AN INCREDULOUS MAN DOES NOT BELIEVE IN THE SAUSAGE-TREE.

THERE are moments at which I accuse myself of great restlessness of mind, and of a strong inclination for vagabondizing, when I look back at the road I have already travelled in my garden in search of new things, when there are so many which I pass by without favouring them with a glance.

As I was going out this morning to resume my journey from a tuft of *flax* at which I stopped yesterday, I perceived that there was going on upon the arm of my old *fauteuil*, life, manners, manœuvres, and industry; in a word, all that we go so far in search of.

The little moths, very agreeably shaded with grey, that we see flying about our apartments in an evening, have not always, any more than other moths, enjoyed that capricious flight or agreeable lightness; they have been caterpillars,

as the others have. But these caterpillars were not fed during their lives upon either leaves or flowers, nor did they at the period of transformation spin themselves a shroud of silk.

These are very small caterpillars with sixteen legs, and which are seldom seen, although the traces of their passage can but too plainly be perceived in stuffs and furs, in which they make for themselves a wide road, considering their size, and which they ravage and destroy without mercy.

During the summer these little grey moths that flit about in houses, deposit their white eggs upon some of the hangings of the furniture; little caterpillars issue from these eggs, and immediately set about feeding and clothing themselves. The stuff upon which they are born presents them at once with vestments and food; they tear out hairs of the wool, and make of them a case or sheath, which they elongate and enlarge in proportion with their own growth. When the vestment is finished, they still continue to pull out the hairs of wool, but now for the purpose of eating them.

If one of these little caterpillars, which pass, even in that state, by the general name of *the moth*, be upon red cloth, its covering will be red; this is the case just now upon the arm of my chair, which is of woollen velvet; if it be upon furniture of other colours, these colours will, in the same way, be recognised in its vestments. This, which appears so necessary that it is scarcely worth while to repeat it, is not however without exceptions. It sometimes happens, that a moth placed upon red cloth makes itself a white coat, and that another born upon grey cloth weaves itself a red or blue vestment. But if you examine these stuffs through a microscope you will see white hairs in the red cloth, and hairs of all sorts of colours in the grey, of which it has pleased the moth, for reasons with which I am unacquainted, to make an exclusive choice.

Whether it prefers a certain colour for its vestment, and others for its food, I know not; I have not been able to discover any convincing proof whether this insect coquetry prevails over greediness.

We may however say, that in case of famine, the moth eats its own coat, and appears to think it delicious food; others

find upon fur the means of satisfying both these imperative wants, up to the moment at which they go and conceal themselves in some corner of an apartment, preparatory to becoming butterflies.

I could easily believe that these moths were unknown to the ancients, if I had any faith in the accounts of people who said that they had seen the clothes of Servius Tullius five hundred years after his death.

But Pliny tells us of a means of preserving things from the moth, which proves that the furniture and clothes of these great men, who have been the cause of our making so many "themes," "verses," and "reflections," in our childhood, were no more exempt from it than my old arm-chair. He asserts very seriously that clothes placed for a few minutes upon a coffin, will never be attacked by moths.

Some more modern *savants* have not thought proper to have any faith in this receipt of Pliny's, but they advise people to wrap up the stuffs they wish to preserve in the skin of a lion, thinking, doubtless, that these little insects had taken in earnest the royalty which man has conceded to the lion, and that they would respect this monarch, although conquered, skinned, and become a carpet or rug.

This is an experiment that will succeed no better with lions than with other monarchs. Moths eat stuffs enclosed in a lion's skin with the same assurance and impunity as the will of Louis XIV. was set at nought.

It seems true I am, like you, a traveller; if I remained all this time in my old arm-chair, it was only because the sky looked grey and threatening; but a bright ray breaks through the clouds, and I will pursue my walk in my garden, and visit that little tuft of flax near which I yesterday broke off my account.

A man was once pointed out to me whom credulity had rendered absolutely mad. At first, a person had innocently said to him, pointing to a peasant with some flax in his hand, "There is a man sowing shirts." He smiled. It was then explained to him seriously and truly, that from this seed would grow a plant, which, by means of preparations, would become excellent cloth, and that from this cloth shirts would be made. This idea did not find entrance into his brain without causing a little tumult there, and the people around

him continued to amuse themselves with cramming him with the most absurd ideas upon the vegetable kingdom.

One day they told him that there was in the king's garden a sausage-tree of great beauty.

"What do you mean by a sausage-tree?" asked he.

"What's a sausage-tree? there's a question! What's an apricot-tree?"

"A tree that bears apricots."

"Well?"

"Well!"

"Well! why, the sausage-tree is a tree that bears sausages."

"Pooh! nonsense! Porkbutchers make sausages."

"I know very well that porkbutchers make sausages; porkbutchers make sausages, it is true; but what sort of sausages? It is just the same as little Eulalie, who lives near you; she makes flowers; but in stuffs or wools. Are you astonished that because Eulalie makes roses, that rose-bushes should produce them likewise? Eulalie makes artificial flowers."

"What! do porkbutchers then make artificial sausages?"

"Exactly so, my good friend; but the sausages of the porkbutchers are like the roses of Eulalie to nature, what the false is to the true. If you had ever eaten the fruit of the sausage-tree, you would never allow your teeth to touch the gross imitation that you have hitherto eaten."

"Ah! but, now tell me, are there really any sausage-trees?"

At this mark of wavering incredulity the friends only deigned to reply by shrugging up their shoulders, and continued to talk among themselves about the sausage-tree, without appearing to be willing to admit incredulity any longer into their conversation.

"Is it the garlic variety which is in the king's garden?" asked one.

"Yes," replied the other.

"Ah, that's the most rare of all."

"But the tree had very little fruit on it this year. You are aware that the sausage-tree originally comes from a hot climate; and the winters here try it severely; part of the blossoms were destroyed by the late frosts."

"It is a pity we cannot get one, to convince our sceptical friend here."

"I could easily get one, because I am intimate with the head gardener; but I don't think it worth the trouble to convince him; I hate these upstart minds, that are so disdainful of the beliefs of the vulgar; who aim at producing an effect by giving faith to nothing; who appear to take men for simpletons, amongst whom they form a brilliant and solitary exception."

"But," says our hero, "I ask nothing better than to believe when I am convinced by proofs."

"Proofs! Have I not already told you that shirts were sown and reaped? Do you not know that cotton grows upon a cotton-tree, and that sugar is the produce of a reed? Perhaps you don't believe that."

"I ask your pardon; yes, I do."

"I will be bound you doubt that hemp is the seed of ropes, or that snuff is the seed of the ideas which we sow in our brain through the nose. Or perhaps you do not believe that peaches grow upon peach-trees; you prefer believing, no doubt, that porkbutchers make peaches?"

"No, I don't say that."

"Neither do you believe, I suppose, that rose-bushes produce roses; you think that all roses are made by Mademoiselle Eulalie, do you not?"

"Not at all. I know very well—"

"You really know nothing at all. Do you know that gunpowder is the seed of death? Do you know that apples come from trees? But you say you will believe nothing without proof, and will doubt next whether braces grow upon the Indian brace-tree?"

"Well, I certainly did not know *that*. What, do you say that braces grow upon a tree like apples?"

"I do not tell you that the tree is like an apple-tree; on the contrary, it is a fig-tree, which is called *ficus elastica*, because whilst cutting the braces which it produces, they draw Indian rubber from it."

"Ah! that's a different thing; I thought you were speaking of braces with *metal* springs."

"That's the way in which you always believe. Those metal springs are artificial springs, a wretched imitation of the *ficus elastica*, or brace-tree of India; so with the roses of

Mademoiselle Eulalie; so with the sausages of the pork-butchers."

"Let us prove to him that braces grow upon the brace-tree.—With all my heart; here is a botanical work, look for the word *Ficus.*

"*Ficus. Ficus religiosa*—that's not it. *Ficus bengalensis*—nor that. *Ficus virens, ficus scabra, ficus mauritana*—none of them. *Ficus populifolia, ficus ulmifolia.* No. *Ficus laurifolia, ficus cetrifolia, ficus crassinervia, ficus ferruginea, ficus racemosa, ficus phytolaccœfolia, ficus glaucophylla, ficus scandens, ficus rubiginosa, ficus macrophylla, ficus nymphœifolia.* No. Where can it be? Ah! here it is, *ficus elastica.*

"Well. *ficus clastica,* does it exist? yes or no. Answer. Can you read? What is that before you?"

"*Ficus elastica.*"

"Well do you believe that India exists? If you do not believe that India exists, why, we must show it to you on a map: besides, you know what *Poules d'Inde* (turkeys) are? you know what *Marrons d'Inde* (large chestnuts) are? Now here are braces produced from the *ficus elastica;* they are good for nothing. they grew in the greenhouse at the Jardin des Plantes. There are none good but such as are brought from India every year, just the same as they grow pineapples; all foreign fruits are in greatest perfection in their own country. It is said the crop is excellent this year, the brace-trees are loaded. Well, do you believe me now? Have you proofs enough of that?"

"Oh, yes, when you produce good reasons—"

"Well, it's just the same with the sausage-tree. Is that more surprising than braces on the *ficus elastica?* If you are only willing to believe what you have seen, you will not believe much, my good friend."

The next morning they had a large *cervelas à l'ail* (a large sausage seasoned with garlic) served for his breakfast.

"Well, my friend, we have been fortunate enough to get one; as nothing could convince you but proofs, here it is."

They tasted the sausage, and found it excellent.

"Do you imagine a vulgar porkbutcher could make anything like that?

'Rien n'est beau que le vrai; le vrai seul est aimable.'
(Nothing is beautiful but truth; truth alone is lovely.)

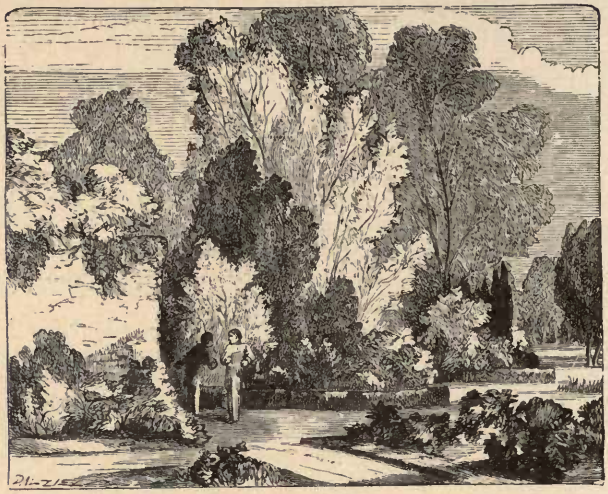
"And yet this even is not half so good as it might be; in the first place, it did not grow in its native country, and then it is not quite ripe; but such as it is, it is quite another thing from those which the porkbutcher so coarsely imitates."

"Well, but this is very astonishing!"

"What is there astonishing in it? You know very well that garlic grows in the earth. Does not nature produce pig? Thus you admit that nature has produced the two elements with which porkbutchers make their bad garlic sausages, and you are not willing to believe that she has produced these elements united in one and the same fruit?

"Has not nature given to certain arums the odour of a leg of mutton that has hung too long? Has she not given to the Buddlea the colour and the odour of the stamens of the saffron? Has she not? But you must have proofs! Monsieur believes nothing without proofs. In good sooth, my friend, I must tell you the truth, you become quite unsociable; there is no such thing as holding a conversation with you, none of the ingenuousness of friendship, everything assumes the air of a theorem, you must have proof of everything. It will not be long before you will require proof that the sun shines, or that it rains. And truly, I don't know how we shall furnish you with it," &c. &c.

This nonsense, uttered with the utmost confidence by five or six men, and all directed against this poor fellow, whom they constantly accused of incredulity and Voltairianism, whom they style sceptic, strong-minded, or M. Arouet, ended by completely turning his brain.



LETTER XLII.

FLAX—THE DISCOMFITED FLORISTS.

I HAVE not yet done with my tuft of flax.

Flax has a slender stalk a foot high, and is of a sea-green colour; every morning it displays pretty pale blue flowers, which yield to the ardour of the sun, fall, and are replaced by others on the morrow.

Some tolerably large books have been written upon this important subject: were the vestments of the Egyptian priests, and of the persons initiated into the mysteries of Isis, really made of linen or cotton?

Upon this question travellers afford us the following information:—

Osbeck (Voyage aux Indes) says that flax is not known in Egypt. Olivier (Mémoire sur l'Egypte) says that immense quantities of flax are cultivated in that country.

Science, thanks to travellers, is just as far advanced on this point as an inhabitant of La Place Sulpice, who had never been any further than the Luxembourg.

Just now I wrote or pronounced the name of Buddlea; for it always appears to me in my unpremeditated, off-hand letters, that I am quietly chattering by the fireside.

I knew two amateurs of flowers who were animated by a noble and touching emulation in their cultivation.

The pleasure of the one, when obtaining a new flower, was not to see the flower, to watch the progress of its vegetation, to admire the splendour of its colours, to breathe its perfume, —the pleasure, the true pleasure, was to show it to the other. and to see him envy him the possession of it. Happy in having the plant, he was still more happy that the other had it not. A friendship founded upon such bases might last for a long time, but could not be secure from occasional tempests.

There came a year in which one of our two horticulturists assumed a more reserved air than common; he looked like a balloon ready to burst; to such a degree was he puffed out with ill concealed satisfaction and dangerously rarefied vanity.

The other affected a modest air, perpetual admiration of the *acquisitions*, or the *jewels* of his rival.

For persons who knew them both this was a certain sign that each of them expected the blooming of something that would be very disagreeable to his friend, the flowering of some grief for him: each, in the meantime, made extraordinary concessions to the other. People don't willingly lose a friend in whom they are sure speedily to inspire so much envy.

The younger of the two, M. Ollbruck, came to ask pardon of M. Rémond, for a pleasantry of very bad taste which he had committed the year before.

This was the joke.

That year, after having reciprocally invited each other to visit successively their hyacinths, their tulips, their anemones, their auriculas, their roses, their pinks; in a word, all the flowers allowed to be flowers, in the same manner, as we have before said, only certain animals are allowed by sportsmen to be game, neither had obtained the least advantage over the other. A conqueror in hyacinths, M.

Rémond had been conquered in tulips, had taken his revenge in auriculas, but the equilibrium had been reestablished by the blooming of the ranunculuses.

But in the month of June, M. Rémond led M. Ollbruck to a corner of his garden, and showed him a large thistle with immense leaves spotted with white, called the Charden-marie,* in full splendour.

Now, this is really a plant of great magnificence, and of which I take particular care in my garden; but could never be deemed worthy of a second glance by so thorough an amateur as M. Ollbruck. We do not cultivate thistles; and, however handsome a thistle may be, it is but a thistle.

M. Rémond would not have thought much of it in his neighbour's garden; but in his own, it was, he said, an admirable plant.

M. Ollbruck asked him why he did not make a collection of nettles, and a collection of chickweed, as well as a collection of thistles. They parted comfortably, and M. Ollbruck, availing himself of the first pretext to write to his friend and rival, addressed him thus:

"A Monsieur,
Monsieur Rémond, orties-cultеur."

For this piece of diluted facetiousness it was that M. Ollbruck came to ask a pardon which M. Rémond granted with great eagerness; and each began the performance of his character.

M. Rémond rubbed his hands and said, "Ah! ah! my fine fellow, it is not a thistle this time; it is a good and a beautiful thing; it is something quite unknown, something that you have never seen; you will not have much occasion to crow over me this year."

M. Ollbruck, on the contrary, said, "You will not have much trouble in beating me; for I have really nothing:—ah! yes,—but a bagatelle, a nothing, which does not displease me; but which you, perhaps, will not deign to look at,—and, perhaps, you will be in the right; for, perhaps, I am wrong in admiring it."

And M. Rémond, who knew his man, said to himself: "Hem! hem! it would appear he has something very good, that is his manner; but never mind that, all the better even:

* *Carduus marianus.* The milk thistle.

if he has anything very good, I would rather it should be this year than any other, in which I am stronger than I ever have been."

"My good Monsieur Rémond," M. Ollbruck came one morning to say, in a very bland manner, "if it would not inconvenience you, I should like very much for you to come and see the little thing I spoke of."

"Ah! are you there, my dear Ollbruck? I am delighted to see you,we will go and visit my triumph to-morrow morning, —I am curious to see what sort of a figure you will make."

"My good Monsieur Rémond, I will go and humble myself before your magnificence whenever you please; but that which I have to show you is such a trifle that I do not entertain a hope that you will think it worthy of a second glance."

"This fellow is pretty confident," thought Rémond to himself; then he added aloud: "Listen, Ollbruck, I warn you of one thing, which is, that my plant, brilliant as it will appear to you, is not in perfection; it suffered from the last winter."

"That is exactly the case with mine, Monsieur Rémond, the winter tried it very severely."

"But, you know, the prettiest girl in the world ——"

"Exactly! exactly!"

After long ceremonies, they went to Rémond's garden, and there Rémond showed us (for I was with them) a beautiful shrub, the young branches of which are white; the large, oblong, figured leaves, of a deep green on the upper side, and white beneath, do not abandon the tree during the winter. At the extremity of each branch blows a lax cluster of seven or eight round balls formed into little alveoles or cells like those of a honeycomb; the centre ball is of the most splendid orange-colour, and yields an agreeable saffron odour; when the flower begins to decline, it smells like honey; it was a Buddlea.*

"Well!" said M. Rémond, triumphantly.

Ollbruck was confounded, pale, speechless.

"Well! what do you say to that?" repeated M. Rémond.

"It is fine, it is superb; but I know the plant."

"I did not imagine you did not know the plant. I know

* Named after an eminent English botanist of the time of Ray, Adam Buddle, *floruit circa* 1700.

the crown diamonds, but I am not the possessor of them any the more for that. Breathe this odour, and look at this colour!—the leaves *evergreen*—my poor Ollbruck! A tree which does not shed its leaves in the winter—and what leaves! green at top and lined with silver! I did not expect to see you so completely astonished. Never mind, Ollbruck, you will have your revenge next year. Come, let us go and see your prodigy!"

"My prodigy!" cried Ollbruck, as if waking from a dream. "Yes, come, let us go and see it at once, and if you are not as much astonished as I am—"

We went straight to Ollbruck's garden, and he showed us —what?—the Buddlea!—precisely the same shrub we had been admiring in Rémond's.

Rémond was in his turn overwhelmed with vexation, for, for him as well as for Ollbruck, the Buddlea immediately lost all value. What does either care for its beautiful evergreen foliage, for the splendour or perfume of the flowers?

Upon inquiring into the cause of this whimsical coincidence, it was found that they were both victims of the artful knavery of a gardener.

This comical fellow, knowing their mania, went to one after the other; but first presented himself to M. Rémond.

"Monsieur Rémond, I have a rare plant to show you."

"What is it?"

"It is a Buddlea."

"A Buddlea! I don't know that name."

"I can very well believe that: you don't know the plant; come and look at it at my garden."

Rémond accompanied the gardener, and was astonished.

"How much do you want for it?"

"A louis."

"How many have you of them?"

"Two. I mean to offer the second to M. Ollbruck."

"Oh, no! don't do that. What must I give you for the two?"

"Three louis."

"What! instead of abating me something."

"Your taking both will be of no advantage to me. I am certain that M. Ollbruck would take the second of me."

"Come, put them down at two louis."

"I cannot. I must have something for the pleasure of which I deprive myself in not offering it to M. Ollbruch, who is a very good customer, and never takes his dahlias of Vaulin."

"Ah! apropos, I bespeak twenty-five dahlias, six of which must be white-tipped."

"Very well; but listen, M. Rémond: only take one Buddlea. I know that three louis is too dear, and I would rather gain only one louis by the two, and please at the same time both you and M. Ollbruck."

"Well, if it must be so, here are the three louis."

"No; truly, Sir, I would rather you would only take one; M. Ollbruck will be angry."

"The bargain is made, I will take the plants with me, and here are the three louis."

M. Rémond plants one of his Buddleas, breaks the other to pieces, and burns it.

He was scarcely gone when the gardener replaced the two Buddleas by two others, and went to seek M. Ollbruck, upon whom he played off exactly the same trick. He reserved the second for M. Rémond.

Ollbruck acted in just the same manner that Rémond had done, and each counted the days to the period at which he hoped to humble his rival by the sight of the famous Buddlea.

The Buddlea in their eyes is no longer good for anything but firewood. Ollbruck pulled up his, and trampled it under his feet. I saved Rémond's, which was about to share the same fate, and planted it in my garden, where it forms some apology for the vulgar and common plants to which I give an asylum.

LETTER XLIII.

A MODERN DEITY—A PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF HEMP AND FLAX, WITH THEIR VARIOUS FORTUNES FROM THEIR BIRTH TO THEIR APOTHEOSIS.

EVERYTHING that has been hitherto obeyed having been successively destroyed; all things to which obedience has been rendered having been progressively abolished, men have set about creating new masters. "Man is not," as has been too often said in prose and verse, "a slave who is ambitious of breaking his chains,—he is nothing but a capricious servant who loves to change his master." In political history no tyrant has ever been overthrown but for the advantage of another more or less remote.

People have renounced for ever the old immortal gods, and have imagined themselves an idol which they make for the wants of every day; an all-powerful idol in the morning, which meets with some incredulous votaries at mid-day, and impious ones at three o'clock.

This is the manner in which he is made:—Towards the end of March, the seed of flax is sown in light ground, and the seed of hemp in ground that has been well manured.

In the month of July the hemp puts forth some insignificant greenish flowers, and shortly its grey round seeds, of which birds are so fond, and which they come and steal, follow: it may truly be said of it,—

"Aux petits des oiseaux il donne la pâture."
(To the young of birds he gives food.)

In the month of June the fields of flax are covered with little blue flowers upon slender stalks, which bend and roll with the wind like the waves of the sea.

When they both begin to get yellow, they are pulled up and put to steep, that is to say, they are plunged into water. There the terrible power they are destined to wield begins to manifest itself; the fish that inhabit the waters in which they are immersed either fly or perish; the men who are employed in this part of the preparation of them, are affected with a dry cough, and seldom live beyond the age of fifty years.

Both hemp and flax are metamorphosed into thread.

Hemp becomes cordage to moor vessels and boats in rivers, and string for tops and boys' kites.

But what curious and eager crowd is that rushing through the streets? A man, pale and with his eyes fixed, is escorted by soldiers towards the most public place in the city; he is given up to the hangman, who passes a hempen cord round his neck and launches him into eternity.

And here, as from time to time, some believers recognise the idol; and it is well known with what avidity the good women contend for the smallest bits of the cord with which the man has been hung.

Numerous vessels glide over the bosom of the sea like great swans with extended wings. These white wings are still hemp transformed into cloth.

During this time, the flax, transformed into cloth likewise, but finer and lighter, replaces the fig-leaf which constituted the sole vestment of our first parents, and which has undergone such strange vicissitudes. Strange to say, the fig-leaf now-a-days must be ten ells long and at least half an ell wide. Apropos of this, I cannot think why so many people persist in clothing our first parents and the statues in public gardens with a *vine*-leaf.

Flax envelopes, conceals, and keeps from contact with the air the satin skins of our ladies.

But both seem threatened with a cessation of these employments; science is lessening the use of sails; fashion is making a reform in linen vestments.

When once upon the precipitous declivity of decline and dishonour, they are not long in becoming sad rags, degraded strips, thrown away with disdain into holes and corners and among the filth of cities.

But this humiliation is the path of thorns which leads to power; it is like the pill which purified Hercules and made him a god.

In general, demi-gods and great men die of hunger, and arrive at immortality a little sooner than they wish, and then their contemporaries willingly deify them in touching festivals in which is mixed a little joy at having got rid of them.

Romulus only became a god after he had been torn to pieces. Claudius gained immortality by means of mushrooms, poison, and the colic.

Thus hemp and flax are not at all discouraged, and wait philosophically in holes and corners for the fresh humiliations which, like a road, separates them, it is true, from supreme power, but which, nevertheless, conducts them to it.

By night, ragged, half-starved men, go about with lanterns in their hands collecting these rags, which they heap together in large tubs, in which the flax and hemp become a sort of infectious matter.

Of this matter paper is made.

Although paper, they have not yet become idols; they are sold by the ream and the quire; but they will not have to wait long.

During this time, on another side, other men are bruising, pounding, diluting poisons, mixing them and turning them over fire, till they become of the colour of mourning.

The priests of the idol which is about to be made, then shut themselves up with the paper, and trace characters upon it. These characters amount to twenty-four; but, by their position, they change both their signification and their value.

If such an one of these figures be placed with such another, and between those certain others, a man a hundred leagues off, lifts up his head, feels himself puffed up with joy and pride, and others venerate and envy him.

If, on the contrary, it be another figure which is after such another figure and before such another, the same man is overwhelmed with grief and shame, he dares no longer to leave his house, he shuns the regards of men, everybody attacks him, ridicules him, abuses him.

The idol is folded in four, and slipped underneath doors.

Certainly it cannot be said of him as Virgil said of the goddess of beauty in half a charming verse,—

"Et vera incessu patet Dea."

(Her step betrays the goddess.)

He enters underneath doors, it is true; but, when once entered, he is master of every house; he begins by uttering oracles; then there is but one step from oracles to miracles; of a fool he makes a man of wit, and of a man of wit an idiot; of a sordid and ambitious man a virtuous and disinterested citizen; he sends a king into exile, and crowns whom he pleases.

Then the people who regret old beliefs may experience very great delight. They see them all revive, but considerably augmented.

The idol announces to you miraculous waters, which prevent the hair from growing grey; and blacking which revivifies old boots; and he is believed.

The idol promises the realization of that famous cabbage, which could not be cooked but in a pot as large as a church; and he is believed.

He promises men in place who shall neither corrupt nor be

corrupted, and disinterested citizens, devoted to the public good; and he is believed.

To try your faith, the oracle relates to you the most absurd histories; and you believe him.

Never was a deity so punctually obeyed.

But the day is near its end; the day finishes, the idol sees his altars abandoned. On the morrow morning, he finds nothing but disdainful iconoclasts in those that had been his most fervent adorers; he is exposed to more insults than he has undergone in all that life so full of vicissitudes which we have described.

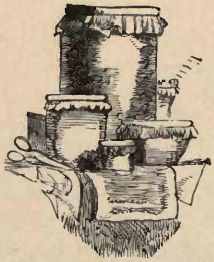
Never was idol so treated, he is cut into round pieces to cover pots of preserves, and into long pieces, to light pipes with; into square pieces, for children to make ducks, boats, and salt-boxes of.

There is no domestic use to which the idol of yesterday may not be degraded to-day.

During this time, another deity, who has likewise been slipped under the door, comes in his turn to utter his oracles; he is listened to and obeyed with the same respect and the same kindness, until on the morrow he goes to the preserve pots and to light the fire.

Such is the true unadorned history of the greatness and the fall of flax and hemp.

Now, who could believe this, particularly of flax, which has so innocent, so pure an air, when it opens in the morning its little blue flowers, so light and so fragile!



LETTER XLIV.

THE TENDRILS OF PLANTS—THE PURPLE OF THE ANCIENTS—THE MARCH OF THE ORCHIS.

HERE is a singular law which I have never known to be infringed: among the climbing plants all do not form the spiral by which they embrace the tree or the trellis to which they cling in the same manner.

The convolvulus, which opens its beautiful bells of all colours in the morning a little before day; the scarlet-runner, with its brilliant flowers, which climbs to the tops of trees; the Wistaria, with its blue clusters, which covers my house—form their spirals from left to right: whilst the honeysuckle, my dear honeysuckle, as well as the hop, turn about supporting trees from right to left, and that always without exception. Never will a honeysuckle or a hop twine round a tree by turning from left to right. Never will a convolvulus, or a scarlet-runner, or a Wistaria, climb by making their spirals from right to left.

Other climbing plants have particular manners of raising themselves; the vine, the passion-flower, which wears the appearance of a cross of St. Louis; the clematis with its little perfumed flowers, the sweet pea with its odoriferous butterflies, attach themselves by little elastic gimlets in the shape of corkscrews.

Ivy ascends straight up, shooting little roots into the bark of trees or into the chinks in walls.

And in the same manner acts the *Bignonia radicans*, except that it only fastens its old wood, and lets its branches of the year droop with their clusters of long red flowers.

The jasmin with its silver stars supports its new shoots upon its old branches.

So likewise does the woody nightshade, whose bunches of violet flowers are succeeded by magnificent girandoles of emerald or coral (I say coral for want of a stone as brilliant as the berries of the nightshade) according to the degree of maturity of its fruit.

The brier and the periwinkle climb by the strength of the sap alone, fall back when they attain a certain height, immediately take root again by the point with which they touch the earth, and spring up again with fresh vigour.

In one of my preceding letters, when speaking of colours, I asked if there were a *savant* who could tell what was exactly the colour of the purple of the ancients. I, this morning, stumbled by accident upon a passage in Pliny, which says that the flower of the Amaranth is of a more beautiful purple than any that dyers can attain. Unfortunately, the Amaranth is a flower that *sports* very much; there are Amaranth flowers of all the shades of carmine, from rose-colour to violet, there are some approaching to white, and some yellow. If Pliny had chosen for the term of his comparison a flower of a fixed colour, we should have our question answered.

This reminds me that Virgil, in the fourth book of the Georgics, says saffron is red,—

"Crocumque rubentem."

The saffron is violet, and has orange stamens. I do not know which of these colours is called red in Latin. It is

equally to be regretted that we have not the black violet, which is elsewhere mentioned—

"Et nigræ violæ sunt."

A *savant* has calculated what is the rate of march of the orchids. It must first be proved how the orchids can change their places: the orchis is a spike of little violet, rose, white, or variegated flowers which issues from two bulbs, one of which is small, empty, and as if become thin; whilst the other is white and full of juice.

The smaller of the two bulbs, the wrinkled one, is that from which the flower draws its sap and its nourishment; the other will nourish the flower next year. Now, these two bulbs being distant from each other by some lines, when the old one becomes quite dry, and a new bulb has grown by the side of the other, the plant will be displaced by the space which is that year between the two bulbs, that is to say nearly six lines, which shows that it would not require more than twelve thousand years for the orchis to travel a league!

LETTER XLV.

NATURE'S SYMPATHY LESS SUBLIME THAN ITS INDIFFERENCE

It appears that formerly trees and plants were happily connected with men in various ways, which connexions have been now interrupted. I neither know why nor how; it would be a difficult matter to say which was wrong first.

If a shepherd left his country for a short time, everything reminded him of it, everything mourned his absence:

"Te Tityre pinus,
Ipsi te fontes, ipsa hæc arbusta vocabant."

Pellio has a son born. That gives pleasure to both the barley and the wheat; they take a touching part in the happiness of the lieutenant of Augustus:

"Flavescet campus aristâ."

The sheep not finding themselves sufficiently well dressed

for the occasion, think it their duty, and make it a pleasure to stain themselves red and yellow:

" Ipse sed in pratis aries jam suave rubenti
Murice, jam croceo mutabit vellera luto."

Gallus is a prey to unsuccessful love; the laurels pity him sincerely, and the brambles even shed some tears over his fate:

" Illum etiam lauri, illum etiam flevere myricæ."

When Anacreon wishes to drink, the roses come of themselves to crown his silver locks:

" Τὸ ῥόδον τὸ τῶν ἐρώτων,
Τὸ ῥόδον τὸ καλλίφυλλον."

For my part, I am to-day as happy as possible; I have got rid of an annoyance—Edmond is gone, although till the moment of his departure, nothing announced that he did not intend to stay twenty years.

Thus " Happiness is composed of evils we have escaped."

I am happy, and yet I seek in vain in my garden for a little sympathy.

Certainly, I am under no obligation to the roses for being in bloom, or to the honeysuckles for throwing about their odours so prodigally from the tops of the trees; this is not done for my sake; they do not do this for the purpose of associating themselves with my joy.

But there are some flowers which I in some degree reckoned upon; the *gorteria*—that beautiful flower with its green foliage lined with white, and blossoms of a splendid orange colour which only open to the sun—might have shown me a little delicate attention by expanding its rays to-day, although the weather be rather dull.

The *tiger lilies*—those beautiful cups of purple and gold which last only for a few hours—might have prolonged their blooming for a minute or two, as an evidence of rejoicing.

The *aristea*—which, upon a miniature foliage of the iris, exhibits charming little blue roses that close in the shade—might have had the good feeling to keep its blossoms open.

The *briars* and the *laurels* might have afforded me a few tears of joy, as they wept so freely in pity for Gallus.

My pigeons might have become green or blue; and it would not have appeared unkind in the roses if they had tressed up their crests a little.

As for the wheat and barley, I have no complaint to make of them, as I do not know what they would have done, or how they would have behaved themselves, seeing that I have none of either in my garden.

But as to the others—

Here is a rose, now—can you imagine what it has done? It has enveloped in its petals a *rose-beetle*, which is going comfortably to sleep.

The *gorterias* have folded up their petals in their full length; the *asterias* have rolled up theirs, and are absolutely as fast asleep as if Edmond were not gone.

The pigeons—the pigeons have something else to do than to stain themselves blue or red; they think themselves, besides, very well as they are, and are exceedingly busy telling one another so.

The *tiger lilies*, as ragged as ill-closed twists of paper, are ready to fall to the earth; but nothing can equal the indifference of the *briars* and *laurels!*

Seriously this fiction, which poets good and bad have all abused, of showing that trees and flowers partake our sadness and mourning, our joy and our pleasure, is, for me, a less elevated poetry than the superb indifference of nature. I am not convinced even if they have any right to create this falsehood in order to increase the sadness of their songs.

The church bell sounds: the peasants say—Ah! there is a funeral bell!

And now the sun, who has triumphed over the clouds, sheds upon everything the colours of joy and life, like a look of love and goodness, which God allows to fall upon the earth.

The flowers, spreading forth their beauties like a brilliant illumination, appear to attract the sun. The insects seek each other beneath the leaves; the bees hum; the birds sing; sweet odours float around.

And the funeral bell continues its heavy monotonous toll, and the peasants bear to the grave a fair young girl, who so dearly loved flowers, the sun, perfumes, the hum of bees, and the song of birds; that lovely girl who planted many of these

rose-trees; that lovely girl who was so fond and careful of her bees!

They bear her to the cemetery, and to the bottom of the hole which they have dug in the ground to bury her in, a ray of the sun penetrates and gilds the depth of the grave; two butterflies sportively pursue each other over it; in a few months grass will conceal her resting-place, forgetfulness will have overcome remembrance; flowers will bloom upon that grave; the smile will return to the lips of him who loved her, another love will spring up in his heart, and he will whisper it to another; under those very same trees, the rays of that same sun will play among the hyacinthine curls of this new love, the same perfumes, the same songs of birds will fill the air; and perhaps he may offer her a rose gathered from one of the trees this fair dead girl had planted!

LETTER XLVI.

THE CONNOISSEUR IS DECEIVED.

A MAN, with whom I was very intimate when I was an inhabitant of cities, came to see me, and we conversed a great deal upon our opposite tastes, and upon the things which occupy and give interest to our lives.

On his part, he takes no account of flowers, or trees, or the heavens, or the moon, or men, or animals; none of these can interest him till after they have been reduced, flattened, disfigured, and traced upon canvas by means of colours and a brush. He gives a high price for the images of things which in his eyes have no value; he paid 9,950 francs for a picture by Van Huysum. This picture represents a vase of flowers.

The real bouquet—the living bouquet, with its splendour and its perfumes, might be worth twenty sous.

For the portrait of this bouquet, that is to say, a flat imitation, false in colours, and smelling of oil, he paid 9,950 francs! and is proud and happy at having made so good a bargain!

I conducted him round my garden, but he looked at scarcely anything. A branch of hundred-leaved roses, bending under the weight of its blossoms, for a moment, however, attracted his attention: he looked at it and exclaimed, "How like that is to a bouquet of roses by Van Daël which I have at home!"

It was very evident that he thought nature had made an attempt to imitate his picture.

In the evening, after supper, pipes and some Turkey tobacco were brought in, and we chatted upon all manner of things; but he always contrived means to bring the subject round to one of his pictures, by some imperceptible thread or other.

At length, "Listen," said I. "I likewise have pictures, but I will only show them to you by daylight; to-morrow morning will do."

"And what pictures have you?" asked he, with a more than half disdainful air.

"I have a great number."

"Are they pictures by known masters?"

"I suppose so; for I have never seen any more beautiful, more grand in their *ensemble*, or more finished in their details."

"Ah, ah! we shall see that."

"Oh! I don't conceal them from anybody. I am not one of those egotistical amateurs, who find less pleasure in the possession of their pictures, than they do in the conviction that others have none, or at least that they have not the same."

"Did your collection cost you much?"

"I got it for nothing."

"For nothing! Oh, I know what that means! Picture amateurs are divided into two classes: those of the first have expended millions upon their galleries; those of the second, on the contrary, always get their pictures for nothing. Their

pretence is to have discovered them on the shelves of some dealers in images, or upon panels over the chimney of a village inn, or even among a lot of old bottles. You are of the second class."

"You are welcome to place me in which class you please."

"Well; but by whom are your best pictures?"

"Oh! as to that, I really cannot tell you; I have no memory for names. And, to be frank with you, it is a circumstance I pay no attention to. I should prefer having a fine picture painted by my porter to a daub by Raffaelle. And what is very singular, this opinion, worthy, from its ingenuousness, of being placed in the rank of the maxims and thoughts of M. de la Palesse, would easily pass for an originality or a whimsicality. I seek for nothing in painting but the true and the beautiful."

"You really excite my curiosity to see the pictures of a man who entertains such ideas. Can't you recollect any of them?"

"Oh, yes. I could easily describe, at least for the most part, what my pictures represent."

"Well."

"Well, I have one above this room; it is of a vast plain, surrounded on all sides by trees. Upon the verdant grass, dotted with shadow and light by the sun which is setting behind the trees, repose some sheep. The whole has a charm of calmness and repose which yields the greatest pleasure."

"I am sure that is by Van der Doës. Well, that is not worth much."

"All I know is, that it is very beautiful; and I do not believe that it is by Van der Doës."

"You astonish me."

"Another is a sunken road, such as in Normandy is called *une cavée*. Travellers walk lower than the roots of trees, whose tops extend over the wall of earth which forms the two sides of the road, thick and long roots like twisted serpents."

"I should not be surprised if that were a copy; and my reason for thinking so, a reason which I think good, and not subject to contradiction, is that I possess the original, which is by J. Ruysdaël."

"I assure you it is not a copy."

"Ah! we shall see."

"I am convinced that a sight of the picture will make you change your opinion. By the side of it you see the entrance to a village; amidst trees with rounded tops shoots up the church spire; the sun, which darts his oblique rays, fills the foliage of the trees with golden sparks; a peasant is driving home his cart."

"If that picture be, as I think it is, by J. Ostade, it *is* valuable."

"I do not believe that any Ostade ever did anything approaching it."

"My dear friend, you don't understand the Ostades."

"I was yesterday looking at another picture which delighted me very much: a child was seated at a window blowing soap-bubbles; the child was serious and attentive, whilst the bubble, still a captive, appeared to grow larger and larger, as it balanced itself upon an imperceptible breath of air. The most enchanting colours succeeded each other upon this frail globe of glass."

"Oh; that is a well-known picture! I saw it at the house of an amateur, from whom you must have bought it: that is by J. Mieris."

"I did not buy it."

"Oh, dear no; I suppose it was given you!—or else you found it! As I told you, you are an amateur of the second class. You pretend to have got for nothing a picture worth 6,000 francs!"

"The back ground of another is composed of magnificent chestnut-trees, with large leaves of golden green, rendered still more so by the rays of the setting sun; a small house covered with vines is entirely gilded by the last warm rays of the star of day; nearer, and towards the centre, a Bohemian olive, and an elder-tree much lower down; so that the oblique rays of the sun passing over and into the shade, leave the foliage of the first of a whiteish hue, and the tuft of the latter of a dark green. In front of the elder is a purple blossomed rose; its lower flowers are in shade; one alone, which shoots beyond the elder, catches a ray of the sun, and looks like a magnificent ruby."

"Are there no figures?"

"None."

"Then I cannot tell whom that can be by."

"I feel no doubt that you will recognise the master when you see the picture."

"Very possibly—nay, even probably, I may; but at present my memory does not furnish me with anything like that."

"I saw another this morning which very much interested me. It was a beautiful woman, holding a pink in her hand."

"Oh, well known: that's by Rubens."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it; but you must permit me to be less sure of another thing."

"Oh, certainly; and pray what is the thing of which you are not sure?"

"That is, that this picture can belong to you."

"Well, I don't positively say it does belong to me; but what I do say is, that I saw it in my house this morning."

"My dear friend, my dear friend! allow me to speak frankly to you. There is one thing I greatly fear on your account; I am afraid you are the dupe of some picture-dealer, who has plundered you and made you pay very dear for mere daubs."

"I beg you, my good friend, to keep this kind interest for others; I do assure you that the pictures of which I tell you are all that is most beautiful; I have never seen any, in any gallery, which can compare with mine, either in truth, design, or colour."

"I am accustomed to hear every amateur, if he be only the master of three middling copies, or five or six unowned sketches, seek to make himself believe that he possesses miracles. Now, I may be allowed to say to you what I am going to observe, because you do not pretend to be rich, but on the contrary, you rather pretend not to be so. Well; I know the value of the pictures you have described to me; and I declare to you, that if you really possess them; if, as you tell me, these form but a small part of your collection; if you have not amused yourself with laughing at me. . . . . How many pictures have you?"

"Too many to count."

"Well, then; your gallery cannot have cost you less than 200,000 francs."

"Nonsense! It cost me nothing."

"You are certainly the most audacious of any amateur of this kind I have ever met with. I wish to-morrow were come."

The next morning I led my friend into a large room with four windows, and said to him, "Here are my pictures, and the windows are the frames."

"Oh! that's but a joke!"

"Not at all; look, some of my pictures are a little changed since the last time I looked at them, but they are not the less beautiful on that account. This is the one you took to be Ostade, and which is, as the others, simply by the Almighty. There are the trees and the steeple; the cart is no longer there, but there is a girl driving cows to pasture, which is better. Do you believe that Ostade ever attained that truth, that drawing, that colour, that light?

"Here, on the left, through the other window, is the hollowed road, which is not by J. Ruysdaël, and of which you pretend to have the original; I had a right, however, to tell you that mine is not a copy; it is evident that of the two pictures, however original yours may be, mine is not the copy.

"And here is the meadow upon which the sun and shade play with such effect; there are the tall trees, and the sheep which repose upon the grass: that likewise is by the Almighty, and not by Van der Doës."

"Well, well; it's all a very good joke."

"No, I am not joking at all; so far from it, I think it is you who are joking, or else take me for an idiot, to hope to make me believe that you attach more value to a little tree daubed upon canvass, flat, without shade, without colours, without perfume, without the song of birds, than to that noble, living tree, which, perfumed and harmonious, covers us with its shade. What! you pay 200,000 francs for the imperfect imitation of a tree worth five francs! will you venture to speak of the difficulty overcome? Why do you not pay more dearly for the imitation of diamonds and rubies than for true diamonds and rubies? and yet that

imitation is much more perfect, and is so successful as to deceive almost anybody. False jewels, as well as true, shine, and draw upon those who wear them, the same admiration, envy, and hatred, that the real ones would; whilst no one is deceived by the painting. The birds which, according to Pliny, wanted to eat the grapes by Zeuxis, would not be so taken in now-a-days; there does not exist any bird so silly as to attempt to build its nest in a painted tree.

"What! and is it to pay so dearly for feeble imitations of all the beautiful things we can have for nothing, that men ruin themselves; fill their lives with anxieties and cares, and stuff their pillows with thorns?

"No, no; it is you who are joking and who are laughing at me; or else I must believe that you, and all who resemble you, are downright madmen."

LETTER XLVII.

A TALE OF YOUTH.

I WILL tell you what a large plum-tree which shades a corner of my favourite grass-plat reminds me of; it is a tale of my youth.

As I had, what is called, gone through my studies with credit; that is to say, as I was acquainted with Latin, and could manage a little Greek, I was very much embarrassed to find an honest means of gaining my living.

Whilst in the embarrassment of this difficulty, I one day met a man in the street, who accosted me by holding out his hand to me. I did not at first recognise him; but at all events it was a mark of kindness, and I gave him my hand, which he shook cordially. He had been, in the college at which I had studied, what is called *a yard dog;* that is to say, guardian over our recreations, positive and negative—recrea-

tions in which we really played, and recreations which we passed in copying:

"A peine nous sortions des portes de Trézène."
(We scarcely ever went out from the gates of Trezene.)

The principal cause of my not knowing him arose from the unwonted splendour of his appearance. He was dressed in black, and wore a watch with a rich gold chain. He told me his name, and explained the change that had taken place in his position. He had left the college, to perform the same office in the establishment of the master of a small private boarding-school. The affairs of this master were in great confusion; to escape from the hands of his creditors, he formed the idea of placing both his school and his furniture under another name, and cast his eyes upon Levasseur. He passed six months in teaching him by rote what he would have to answer the examiners in order to receive his licence to teach; then he made a false sale of his furniture, &c. to him, taking of him a counter letter, to prove the invalidity of the transaction.

A short time afterwards, he fell ill upon a journey, and died at a little inn. Levasseur tore up the counter-letter, which the dead man had placed in his hands on leaving home, and remained sole master of the establishment.

It was a matter of great moment, when I met him, to find an under-master; in the first place, because he was entirely incapable, and in the next, because he was desirous of giving himself a little occasional recreation, and not to be always chained to the oar.

When he met me, I have no doubt he was as much surprised at the modesty of my costume, as I was surprised at the magnificence of his; a remark to which I dare say I was indebted for his proposing to me to come and live with him.

"Listen to me," said he: "we shall be like two brothers; I will share everything with you. I have nothing at present, because I have been obliged to sustain a lawsuit against the creditors of my predecessor, because everything was in bad condition . . . . . he was a man who had no idea of order, and who did me a deal of injury. The capital I placed in this

business is wasted in bringing things about; I am in debt, both for the lawsuit and indispensable repairs. So, you see, I cannot offer you any money at present; you shall be lodged as I am, fed as I am; and as soon as our united efforts shall be successful, you shall share my prosperity as you will have shared my poverty. Will that do?"

The moment was admirably chosen, everything went wrong with me; besides, I took these falsehoods for frankness and honesty: I accepted his offer, reproaching myself for still fancying so good a fellow had a false and vulgar air about him. The next day I took up my abode with him.

I was not long in finding out that he did not treat me exactly like a brother; if he did it was like a younger brother, and kept up in the most rigorous manner the most obliterated traditions even of the rights of the elder born.

My chamber was next to the sky, and furnished with a flock-bed and one chair; of four squares which formed the window of my domicile, and admitted more cold than light, one was of paper. With respect to my food, I dined with him and his wife, a vulgar fat woman. After dinner the first day, they invited me to take some coffee with them, which I at that time did not much like, and some liqueur which I did not like at all, and which I determined to decline in future. On the second day, at coffee-time, Levasseur pretended to listen, and said:—"Monsieur Stephen, I think there is too much noise in school." I arose and went to re-establish order; which, by-the-bye, I found had not been disturbed.

The day after, exactly at the moment for the introduction of coffee, M. Levasseur again believed he heard a noise in school. This appeared to me to be rather singular. I, however, got up, but found all perfectly quiet.

On the following day, the same noise assailed his ears, just at the same instant.

I then perceived that they were not willing to give me any coffee. This discovery relieved me from an annoyance,—that of remaining at table with them; and I adopted the plan of rising from table as soon as I had finished my meal, and going into the school-room, where I could read, or think, or write a letter, which I hoped to be able to slip into

her hand on the following Friday, and I was more happy in doing that than I had ever been in my life.

Every day fresh encroachments were made upon our mutual agreements.

At first, I was at liberty every evening. Then, one day, he wanted to go out, and *begged me* to remain at home for this once. It was not a Friday, so I did not care much about it.

A few days after, came the same prayer and the same success. On the morrow it was the lady who came to me, and said with a smile, if I was disposed to be *very amiable*, I should *allow them* to go to the theatre that night. I stayed at home.

The next day they went out without saying anything, and I stayed at home.

The following day was Friday.

You will ask me, my dear friend, what made me hold Friday so sacred? I will tell you. That day was my everything—it was all my life, all my hope, all my courage. On that day I saw Magdeleine.

Some speculators, I don't remember who, had established a theatre near the city gates. They had applied for aid to M. Muller, who had advanced them some money, and as his principal interest, I believe, had the right of having a weekly box at this theatre. And he took this box generally on a Friday.

Upon this day I cleaned a pair of boots which I reserved exclusively for this great day; I beat, brushed, re-beat and re-brushed my coat; I rubbed ink upon the whitened seams; I stitched on some loose buttons (I had taken pains all the week to secure myself clean linen); I had a pair of gloves which I mended and cleaned over and over again with India-rubber. In spite of all these labours and the strictest economy, there was always some trifling expense to be incurred. M. Levasseur gave me no money; I procured a supply by copying some writings in my moments of leisure; but these moments were now very few, and besides, I wanted to read a little, and then I was under the absolute necessity of writing a large volume, in the shape of letters, which I sometimes succeeded in conveying to Magdeleine on a Friday, in addition to verses. But still I managed to earn by my writing about

ten francs a-week. The entry to the theatre cost me a franc, the rest went to the laundress, and now and then in gloves, which, however seldom used, and taken care of, were not immortal.

I managed always so as to have, on a Friday, my twenty sous to go to the theatre with.

There I saw Magdeleine, there I was enraptured by her presence; my looks met hers, and thence drew strength and courage, hope and faith. As we left the theatre, by favour of the crowd, I generally succeeded in slipping into her hand a letter which I had been writing all the week, and then she gave me in exchange a morsel of paper, a letter from her! When I think of the happiness I then felt, it appears to me that I offended Heaven by the complaints I sometimes have dared to breathe, when it has overwhelmed me with its anger.

We had now come to *the Friday*. This gave me some little scintillations of happiness; but I dreaded lest they should wish me to stay at home: I knew very well that *I would* not stay at home; I knew very well *I should* be at the theatre; but I was not willing to quarrel with M. Levasseur, in whose house I had found the only means I then knew of providing for my existence.

I did not wish to *refuse* to stay at home, if I should be asked; I did not wish to *prevent* their going out, if I saw them get ready, as I had done the evening before.

I wished, without announcing that I was going out, which would have been almost an abdication of my rights,—I wished to manifest my intention before theirs could have shown itself, by a commencement of execution.

I dressed myself beforehand, and came in to dinner quite prepared. M. Levasseur and his wife exchanged looks; Madame Levasseur forgot two or three times to assist me; M. Levasseur heard three or four times a noise in the school-room; then, as I asked the servant for bread, Madame Levasseur observed aloud that there was not a house in Paris in which people ate so much as was eaten in hers.

I felt myself blush; I was on the rack. As soon as dinner was over, I saluted them, they scarcely returned my bow, and I went out. That day Magdeleine did not come to the theatre.

During the week which followed, at first all the Levasseur household was cold towards me: then fresh encroachments were attempted, and as I made no opposition to them, things resumed their former state; they went out every evening. I was, however, determined not to expose myself a second time to the humiliations of the past Friday. I reserved for that day a few sous above the price of my admission to the theatre.

I had a great mind to propose to them to stay at home every day except Friday; but I thought it best to stick to my evenings, because, from some cause or other, Magdeleine's night for going to the theatre might be changed, and then if I were compelled to remain by agreement, labours might be required of me which would have prevented my writing my dear letters, or scribbling some of the sixty thousand verses which I addressed to Magdeleine, and of which she never saw one.

I seized an opportunity in the course of the morning, when I met Madame Levasseur in the garden, to tell her, that *I should not have the honour of dining with her on that day.*

She made me no answer, but called M. Levasseur. They talked for a long time together; for my part, I was in another part of the garden, watching the boys at play; besides, I was to see Magdeleine that evening: as to a Friday being lost, the ill-humour of M. and Madame Levasseur was nothing in comparison with the armed enemies, the infernal fires, the fabulous monsters that I would have encountered and overcome to render myself worthy of my happiness.

The hour being come, I set out and wandered round the theatre to find a place where I could dine for my few sous.

At that time, my friend, I had a tolerably good appetite, and from the door of every restaurant, or even poor eating-house, there issued savoury odours of *gibelottes* or *bœuf à-la-mode*, which attracted me involuntarily: then I thought of the slender state of my finances, and I looked about for more humble fare.

At length I fixed upon a kind of large plot of ground, planted with plum-trees, under which was spread a carpet of turf. The plums were ripe: I asked for three sous' worth of bread and twenty plums, made a delicious dinner, and then went to the theatre. She was there!

I reproached myself for ever having thought of dining; I reproached myself for the paltry regret I had felt at not being able to partake of that *gibelotte*, whose provoking odour had so tempted me.

I exchanged my letter with Magdeleine; after the play they walked home, and I followed them at a distance.

How I should have gloried in their being attacked, that I might have had an opportunity of defending them! how I racked my memory for all the histories of thieves that I had read, and how little doubt did I entertain of the certainty of my victory, whatever might be the number of my assailants!

The following Friday I was less fortunate; I possessed no more than just my twenty sous. I made up my mind not to leave Lavasseur's house till after dinner. But although I had hinted in the morning I should go out in *the evening*, I perceived that the servant, in laying the cloth, neglected to place my knife and fork, conformably with the orders she had received. I had no dinner that day. I had no money to enable me to repeat my excellent repast under the plum-trees. In the evening I returned home, rich in a letter from Magdeleine, but with a sad empty stomach!

At length there came a Friday on which I was very uneasy. Madame Levasseur began by inflicting a good scolding upon the poor servant, and then sent her off, early in the morning, to her dressmakers, to insist upon having her new dress home before evening. M. Levasseur was fresh shaved, although he had gone through that operation only the evening before, and it was his custom to shave every other day.

I foresaw a storm, and I wished to avert it by making a concession. I addressed M. Levasseur, and offered to give up all the other evenings of the week, provided I were at liberty on Fridays.

He answered me, with a little hesitation, that he would see about it, and went to confer with his wife. After a short matrimonial discussion, he came back to me and said, "You can go out next Friday, but to-day"—

"To-day," I replied, "it is indispensable that I should go out to-day."

"You must, however, dispense with it, for the house cannot be left alone, and we are going to the theatre."

"My dear Monsieur Levasseur," said I, "I do not wish to have any difference with you, but you must please to recollect that according to our agreement, I am at liberty to go out every evening, and that by reserving only Friday to myself, I make a concession that you ought to receive, at least, with politeness."

"I don't enter into these reasons," said he; "but I must be master in my own house. I am very willing to permit you to go out on Fridays, but not to-day."

I thought I had paid a sufficiently high ransom for my beloved Fridays in giving up the other days of the week. I replied that I was exceedingly sorry, but that I must go out.

He left me, saying, "Next Friday, if you please; but to-day you must not think of it."

When left alone, I became angry with myself and my apparent want of firmness and spirit. I said no more until the usual hour, when I dressed myself, and prepared to go out. I found M. and Madame Levasseur in the doorway, in full dress; Madame in particular was decked out in flaming style, and her dress occupied an incredible space. They thought to have been beforehand with me, imagining that if they were once gone, I should not dare to leave the house unprotected, and should stay at home. I bowed to them as I passed out before them. M. Levasseur called me back. I turned towards them with the remark that I was late, and rather in a hurry.

"Sir," said M. Levasseur, purple with rage, "I forbade your going out at all."

"Sir," replied I coolly, "have you any right to do so? Do you think you are acting legally and honestly by me? Is this according to our agreement?"

"I don't enter into these reasons," said he; "I am determined to be master in my own house. When I forbid you to go out, you ought not to go out."

"Sir," said I, "I pardon your speaking thus, because I have merited it by my own want of spirit in allowing you to impose upon me as you have done; I leave your house, sir, never to return to it."

"That is just what I wish," answered M. Levasseur. I bowed, and left them

I had no asylum for the night; no prospect of food on the morrow; but that was a matter of no importance then. The play began early that day, and I wished to have time to eat a morsel. The last time I had been to the theatre without dining; I had glanced at myself in a mirror, and found that I looked pale, thin and ugly. I went to the Orchard, where I dined upon two sous' worth of bread and two sous' worth of cheese, then went to the theatre, where I passed my evening delightfully. By a singular chance, in the piece played that night the two lovers bore the same names as myself and Magdeleine ——; our eyes were constantly fixed upon each other, and we applied all the tender things said upon the stage to ourselves.

Upon going out, after having given and received a letter, I escorted them home, at my usual respectful distance.

Then, and not till then, as I mechanically took the road to Levasseur's, I recollected all that had passed, and it came sharply and bitterly to my mind that I had neither home nor bed, and that I must pass the night beneath the canopy of heaven.

In front of M. Muller's house there was a little meadow, from which I could perceive the window of Magdeleine's chamber. I soon saw a light in it, and I fancied she must be reading my letter; whilst I, on my part, for want of light, could only cover hers with tender kisses. Then the light was extinguished.

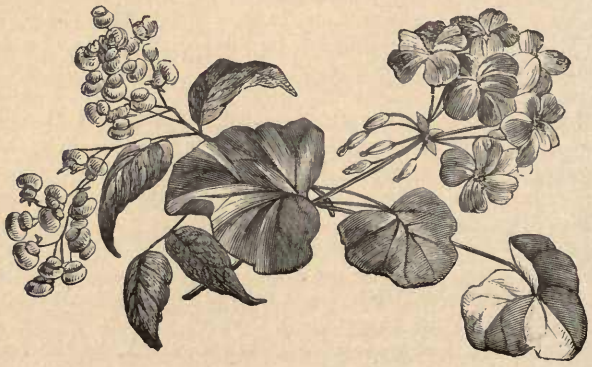
I then pictured to myself Magdeleine sleeping; I thought I could see her beautiful long eyelashes drooping over her cheeks; I dare not repeat the smiling pictures that passed before my mind; I bade her good night twenty times. Good night, Magdeleine; good night, my beloved; good night, my wife! my adored wife, good night!

I laid down upon the grass and went to sleep, regretting only one thing: that I had not read her dear letter, which I held clasped tightly in my hand.

I was awakened some time before daybreak, by the coolness of the morning air; I was fatigued, depressed, chilled; I roused myself, put myself a little to rights, day dawned, and I read her letter, a letter full of tender promises, magic words. I felt rested, refreshed, and in spirits.

I left the little meadow, for fear of being noticed, and wandered about at hazard, reflecting upon what was best to be done. I had still a few sous left, so I went to the Orchard, and made an excellent breakfast upon bread and cheese. I got into conversation with the farmer, and soon made an arrangement with him; I remained with him all the summer, sleeping in a barn, upon straw, copying to gain something to subsist on, but above all to obtain twenty sous for every Friday. I paid daily. When copying failed, I only made one repast a-day; I pretended to make the other at the house of some friend, but I never allowed such necessities to interfere with the sacred price of my ticket for the following Friday.

Now, the Orchard is destroyed, the plum-trees are pulled up, and probably burnt; the farmer is dead, and houses inhabited by people I know nothing of, cover the spot upon which I made so many excellent dinners.



LETTER XLVIII.

THE VINE.

WHAT a magnificent tree is a vine!

You know me sufficiently, my dear friend, to be sure that nothing Bacchic forms part of my admiration; I drink but little wine, and besides, the vines which I love are not best adapted to the production of it. I love these immense wreaths of vine which extend far and wide in rich green garlands, and which become in autumn of a splendid purple. If I cannot be said even to like wine, I don't at all like the poetry it has inspired. To begin with that of Anacreon, who is fortunate in having written in Greek, that is to say, in a language which those even who have learnt it for six years, do not understand; in a language that many pretend to admire, for the sake of appearing to understand it.

Voltaire has justly said, that there are a hundred and fifty

drinking songs in the French language, much better than what are called the Odes of Anacreon, upon the vine and its juice divine.

Τὸ ῥόδον τὸ τῶν ἐρώτων
Μίξωμεν Διονύσῳ
Τὸ ῥόδον τὸ καλλίφυλλον.

"Let us mingle with the liquor of Bacchus, the beautifully leaved rose, the rose of love."

Πίνωμεν . . . γελῶντες.

"Let us drink and laugh."

Such is the matter upon which all the verses of Anacreon dwell. Let us take an ode at hazard.

Εἰς τὸ δεῖν πίνειν.

"Upon the necessity for drinking."

Ἡ γῆ . . .

"The earth drinks the water, the tree drinks the earth, the sea drinks the air, the sun drinks the sea, the moon drinks the sun; why should I be reproached when I drink?"

And the following, in which he wishes to be seated under the shade of Bathyllus,* whom he terms a handsome tree.

And the other:

Ὅταν πίω τὸν οἶνον . . .

"When I drink wine, my cares are laid to sleep."

These ideas are repeated twenty times over, often without even changing the expressions.

Ὅτ' ἐγὼ πίω τὸν οἶνον.

"When I drink, &c., my cares are laid to sleep."

One thing alone distinguishes Anacreon and his odes from other drinkers and other Bacchic songs, which is, that he puts water into his wine, and is not ashamed to own that he does so.

Δεὶ πίνειν μετρίως.

"We must drink with moderation."

Τὰ μὲν δέκ' ἐγχέας
Ὕδατος, τὰ πέντε δ' οἴνου
Κυάθους.

"Mix ten measures of water with five measures of wine."

* A Samian youth, the minion of Anacreon.

Now, whatever the songs of Bacchus may be, it has always appeared to me impossible to see poetry in drunkenness, or rather in the brutified state produced by wine, which transforms men as Circè transformed the companions of Ulysses.

Pliny goes further than Anacreon, with respect to sobriety, even in the weak wine and water of which we have spoken. He tells of a wine with which twenty parts of water were mixed.

Petronius recommends abstinence to those who are desirous of applying themselves to elevated things.

> "Artis severæ si quis amat effectus
> Mentemque magnis applicat, &c."

I love the vine so much for the richness and elegance of its foliage, and for its beautiful violet and golden clusters of fruit.

There is a little beetle or weevil which lives upon the vine; its vestment, although very hard, and rather a cuirass than a vestment, is of a clear green, inclining to blue in the male, sprinkled with gold and silver, in such a manner that it appears to be clothed in magnificent apple-green velvet. It rolls itself up in the leaves of the vine, of which it makes a cornet which it lines with down, and in which it lays its eggs; from these eggs issue white worms, which pass the winter in the earth. The perfect insect has its head terminated by a point armed with shears, with which it does much injury to the grapes.

At the extremity of my garden the vine extends in long porticoes, through the arcades of which may be seen trees of all sorts, and foliage of all colours. Here is an *azerolier* (a small medlar) which is covered in autumn with little scarlet apples, producing the richest effect. I have given away several grafts of this: far from deriving pleasure from the privation of others, I do my utmost to spread and render common and vulgar all the trees and plants that I prefer; it is as if I multiplied the pleasure and the chances of beholding them of all who, like me, really love flowers for their splendour, their grace, and their perfume. Those who, on the contrary, are jealous of their plants, and only esteem them in proportion with their conviction that nobody else possesses

them, do not love flowers; and be assured that it is either chance or poverty which has made them collectors of flowers, instead of being collectors of pictures, cameos, medals, or any other thing that might serve as an excuse for indulging in all the joys of possession, seasoned with the idea that others do not possess.

I have even carried the vulgarization of beautiful flowers further than this.

I ramble about the country near my dwelling, and seek the wildest and least frequented spots. In these, after clearing and preparing a few inches of ground, I scatter the seeds of my most favourite plants, which re-sow themselves, perpetuate themselves, and multiply themselves. At this moment, whilst the fields display nothing but the common red poppy, strollers find with surprise in certain wild nooks of our country, the most beautiful double poppies with their white, red, pink, carnation, and variegated blossoms.

At the foot of an isolated tree, instead of the little bind-weed, with its white flower, may be sometimes found the beautifully climbing convolvulus major, of all the lovely colours that can be imagined.

Sweet peas fasten their tendrils to the bushes, and cover them with the deliciously scented white, rose-colour, or white and violet butterflies.

It affords me immense pleasure to fix upon a wild rose in a hedge, and graft upon it red and white cultivated roses, sometimes simple roses of a magnificent gold yellow, then large Provence roses, or others variegated with red and white.

The rivulets in our neighbourhood do not produce on their banks these forget-me-nots, with their blue flowers, with which the rivulet of my garden is adorned: I mean to save the seed, and scatter it in my walks.

I have observed two young wild quince-trees in the nearest wood; next spring I will graft upon them two of the best kinds of pears.

And then, how I enjoy beforehand and in imagination, the pleasure and surprise which the solitary stroller will experience when he meets in his rambles with those beautiful flowers and those delicious fruits!

This fancy of mine may, one day or other, cause some

THE RIVULET WITHOUT FORGET-ME-NOTS.—P. 284.

learned botanist, who is herborizing in these parts a hundred years hence, to print a stupid and startling system. All these beautiful flowers will have become common in the country, and will give it an aspect peculiar to itself; and, perhaps, chance or the wind will cast a few of the seeds of some of them amidst the grass which shall cover my forgotten grave!

LETTER XLIX.

L'HERBE AU CHANTRE—RACINE—BOILEAU—SORCERERS—PLINY—HOMER —AND YELLOW GARLIC.

HERE, now, is a plant which had the honour of being the object of a correspondence between Racine and Boileau. Gardeners call it the yellow julienne; horticulturists, *Velar de Sainte-Barbe;* savants, *Erysimum barbarea;* * old women, *herbe au chantre.*

It throws up, from a bunch of leaves shaped like a lyre, a stalk surmounted by a thyrsus of yellow flowers.

It was formerly believed, even as late as the time of Louis XIV., that this *herbe au chantre* was, at least in one of its varieties, a sovereign remedy in cases of extinction of the voice.

We find in the correspondence of Racine and Boileau two letters, in which Racine recommends the syrup of erysimum to Boileau, who is visiting the waters of Bourbonne in order

* Now known as *Barbarea.* The yellow rocket of English gardens.—ED.

to be cured of a loss of voice. Boileau replies that he has heard the best accounts of the erysimum, and that he means to make use of it the following summer.

It is a plant of slender pretensions in a garden, and which, as regards a cough, cures it, as any herb would, of which we should persist in drinking an infusion till the cough went away of itself.

For a long time virtues and miracles were attributed to plants, which have been exploded for centuries, virtues founded upon analogies, resemblances, and want of resemblances.

The scabious was in great repute for complaints of the eyes, because the scabious is in shape somewhat like the eyes; one plant was good for the liver, and another for the heart, on account of the shape of their foliage.

Then again, some tiger-spotted plants have been used, solely on that account, against the venom of serpents.

Other plants have received names borrowed from the writings of the ancients, and with their names have been transmitted to them the virtues, most frequently fictitious, which the ancients attributed to the plant pointed out by them. But if these virtues had been real, as the plant of the moderns, though bearing the same name, is frequently a very different plant, it could not participate in any respect with the miracles proclaimed.

Among the virtues attributed to plants, we must not forget that of destroying enchantments, and overpowering the efforts and conjurations of sorcerers.

The service-tree, that fine tree whose umbels of white blossoms are succeeded by bunches of fruit, first green, then yellow, then orange, and then bright scarlet, still enjoys in Scotland a great reputation of this kind. Every year, shepherds make their sheep pass, one by one, through a ring made of the branches of the service-tree. God in the beginning, when creating the service-tree, never designed it to be subservient to such impious follies; He only meant to make a very beautiful tree, covered with very beautiful fruit, which should present in the winter to those other charming objects of His creating, the blackbirds and the thrushes, a sumptuous and an abundant feast.

Among the bulb-gods I forgot to mention a little god of this kind, which is at this moment almost under my feet, which Homer calls *moly*, and the moderns *yellow garlic*, *allium aureum*. Many persons keep it in their gardens, solely for the pleasure of seeing the yellow stars with which it is covered, and are blessed with all the joys of earth, and preserved from all mischances, without feeling the least gratitude towards the garlic, which is, notwithstanding, the only cause of this happy state; preferring, without doubt, to attribute their success in everything to their merit, their wisdom, and their prudence; looking upon the garlic as a mere "bouquet."

But the yellow garlic is more than it appears to be; the yellow garlic has the power of keeping us safe from enchantments, spells, evil presages. A crow may fly by you on your left hand, but you need not entertain any fear if you have only the yellow garlic in your garden. You meet with a spider in the morning—don't be afraid of it; you spill the salt—the mischance will not fall to you; a hare crosses your path in the morning—be not on that account apprehensive of the crosses of the world; the yellow garlic is cherished by you in your garden, and watches over you; the yellow garlic, which affects to bloom simply like any other flower, and has the air of caring about nothing, which yields but a sufficiently disagreeable smell—the yellow garlic will not allow any of these evil omens to affect you. You happen to be thirteen at table, you know that one of the guests of course will die within the year. Let others be made uneasy by this ominous circumstance, others who have not the yellow garlic in their gardens. But this is Friday! To be thirteen at table is a particularly unfortunate affair, when there happens to be barely dinner enough for twelve. Yes, but this is Friday! and Friday is an unlucky day. What is that to you? there is no unlucky day, I tell you, for the fortunate possessor of the yellow garlic.

Pliny as well as Homer was acquainted with the qualities of the yellow garlic.

Pliny says that it is one of the most valuable plants to man. Homer relates that it was to the virtues of the yellow garlic that Ulysses owed his fortunate escape from being

turned into a pig by Circè, as well as his companions, whom he delivered from this disagreeable transformation.

And yet, after all this, perhaps the learned are deceived, when they tell us that the yellow garlic is precisely that which Homer and Pliny call *moly*. Whichever way it may be, I feel quite disposed to recognise equal and the same virtues in both plants.

LETTER L.

VIRTUES OF PLANTS.

THERE exists a work in sufficiently bad Latin, written in old times by a doctor named Johannes de Mediolano, of the Academy of Salerno, and attributed to the entire school of Salerno—

"Anglorum regi scribit *tota* schola Salerni."

This book, which contains all sorts of medical precepts and rules for preserving health, and of which some are exceedingly whimsical, frequently recurs to my memory, in the course of the journey I am making round my garden, on account of the singular virtues attributed to certain plants by the said school of Salerno.

Rue, for example, of which I have already spoken to you, is a plant which merits all sorts of consideration, according to the learned doctor. In fact, by an uncommon prodigy, it diminishes the force of love in man, and, on the contrary, increases the flame in women. This plant clears both the sight, and the perceptions of the mind, when eaten raw; but when cooked, it destroys fleas.*

This I warn you,—and you can make use of *rue* according to your need: if you fall in love imprudently, and, by a strong effort of your own good sense, or by the advice of sincere friends, you perceive your folly, eat your rue raw; if you are tormented by fleas, boil it.

Does not this aphorism, put forth in the most serious manner possible, quoted and respected by all old physicians, —(I am not acquainted with the sentiments of the medical world of the present day with regard to the school of Salerno,)—does not this aphorism appear to have been merely translated in a discourse which a writer of the present day puts into the mouth of a charlatan?—

> "Buy my specific;
> Taken as a liquid it awakens,
> Taken as a powder it promotes sleep."

But rue is nothing in comparison with sage. *Sage* preserves the human race,† and the *whole school* of Salerno, after a long enumeration of the virtues of sage, seriously exclaims: "How can it happen that a man who has sage in his garden, yet ends by dying?" ‡

The learned body replies to itself by saying: "It is a proof of the necessity of death, which nothing can enable us to avoid."

I have in my garden sages of various sorts: one is remarkable for its curious foliage; sometimes one of its notched leaves is painted half rose-colour and green, or rose-colour and white, or green and white. Some leaves are entirely rose-colour, or green, or white.

Another sage exhibits, at the extremity of its branches,

* "*Cruda* comesta . . . .
Ruta facit castum, dat lumen et ingent astrem,
Cocta et ruta facit de pulicibus loca tuta."

† "Salvia salvatrix, naturæ conciliatrix."

‡ "Cur moriatur homo cui salvia crescitin horto?"

flowers, and the as yet unopened cups of flowers, of the brightest red (*Salvia fulgens*); others are of a softer red, its blossoms clothed with a purple down (*Salvia cardinalis*); this one (*Salvia patens*) spreads forth its flowers of so clear and pure a blue, that every silk stuff, having any pretensions to be blue, takes by the side of it a different colour, and inclines to green, yellow, &c.

I do not know whether, in the eyes of the partisans of the school of Salerno, it is not exhibiting an immoderate love of life, with a great desire to become a centenarian, to have so many sage-plants around me; and yet I can safely affirm that I have only been led to cultivate them by the splendour of their hues.

Sage and rue, uniting their powers, allow you to drink as much as your inclination prompts you to take, without injury to your brain. *

Permit me, my friend, whilst we are on the subject, to quote a few more of the precepts of the school of Salerno.

I do not know what walnuts can have done to the learned doctors, but it is impossible to speak more disadvantageously of a poor fruit than they do. The first walnut is good, they say; the second is injurious, the third kills. †

Do you remember the time when we did not take the trouble to count them, when we laid siege with stones to the great walnut-tree which partly shaded the courtyard of the old house where we were educated? How the projectiles hissed as they cut the leaves, and brought down the fruit in showers! How we picked them up, and how we ate the conquered!

Perhaps the danger of eating walnuts is in an inverse sense, as it is in certain games,—when arrived at a certain number of points, you win; but if you exceed that number, you lose. The third nut, doubtless, only kills when you don't eat a fourth; or perhaps this dangerous virtue ceases to exist when the walnuts are stolen!

And do you remember all those games in which walnuts so advantageously took the place of marbles, encouraged as we were in these diversions by the example of the most

* "Salvia cum ruta faciunt tibi pocula tuta."

† "Unica nux prodest, nocet altera, tertia mors est."

famous Romans, the heroes of our themes, who had, like us, played with walnuts in their childhood?

One of the recommendations upon which the learned doctors of whom we were speaking laid great stress, is—"Never eat goose on the first of May:"—

> "Prima dies Maii . . .
> Non carnibus anseris uti!"

But here is an aphorism full of sense and wit.—"Wash your hands often," says the learned doctor Johannes,—"wash your hands often, if you wish to live in good health. Wash your hands after meals; it clears the sight." And then adds, very seriously: "To wash the hands, not only promotes health and clears the sight, but it also, incontestably, cleans them."

LETTER LI.

THE INCOGNITO.

THE master of the tulips placed his finger on his lips, as Harpocrates, the God of Silence, might have done, and then said: "Look! what magnificent hues!—what a form!—what onglets! what a carriage!—what purity in the pencilling!—what clearness in the streaks!—how it is cut!—how it is proportioned!"

"It is really a faultless tulip!"

"What do you call it?"

"Hush! It is a tulip which in itself alone is worth all the rest of my collection. There are but two of them in the world, gentlemen."

"But its name?"

"Hush! Its name! I dare not pronounce it without forfeiting my word of honour. I should be most proud and

very happy to tell its name,—to proclaim it aloud,—to write it in letters of gold over its magnificent corolla. It is a name well known and respected."

"I beg your pardon, Sir; I press no further. There may be something political in the matter: perhaps it is the name of some famous exile. I by no means wish to compromise you. Besides, on such subjects, we may not be of the same opinion."

"Oh! nothing of the kind, Sir; the name has no connexion with politics: but I have sworn upon my honour not to let it be seen under its proper name. It is here *incognito* —under the most severe *incognito*. Perhaps, even already I have said too much. But with everybody—with people for whom I have not the esteem which you inspire me with—I do not go so far; I do not even confess that that tulip is the queen of tulips. I pass before it with indifference—an affected indifference—you understand: I designate it under the name of *Rebecca*. But, mind, that is not its real name."

The amateurs left the garden, and I with them; but on the morrow I returned, and said to him: "But now, really, is this a terrible mystery?"

"You shall judge. This tulip, which we will continue to call the *Rebecca*, was in the possession of a man who had paid very dearly for it; particularly as, knowing there was another of the kind in Holland, he had gone thither to purchase it, and had crushed it beneath his feet, in order to render his own unique. Every year it excited the envy of the numerous amateurs who flock to see his collection; every year he took care to destroy the offsets which formed around the bulb, and which might have produced more of the sort. For my part, Sir, I dare not tell you how much I offered him for one of these offsets, which he every year pounded in a mortar. I would have injured my property to obtain it—compromised the prospects of my children!

"I began to lose all interest in my collection: my most beautiful tulips could not console me for not possessing that one—that one which I dare not name. In vain my friend—ought I to call a man so who allowed me to perish without pity?—in vain my friend said to me, 'Come and see it as often as you please.' I went—I sat down before it for hours

together; but he took care never to leave me alone with it: he dreaded the force of my passion. I dare say I should have stolen it; or else I might have watered it with a deleterious liquid, in order to destroy it: then, at least, it would not have existed, and I should have felt no remorse. When Gyges slew Candaules, in order to obtain his wife, everybody blamed Candaules, who had insisted upon Gyges seeing her as she came out of the bath. They should not have shown me the tulip. I arrived at such a state of despair, that one year I planted no tulips—my dear tulips. My gardener took pity upon them, and perhaps upon me; and the clown—but I must pardon him, because he saved them,—he planted them about in the garden, in vulgar earth!"

"Well, but at length, how did you obtain this tulip?"

"I will tell you. I have not quite imitated Gyges, although my friend had not proved himself to be more delicate than Candaules;—but, nevertheless, that which I did, I fear may be called a crime. I contrived to have an offset stolen. Candaules has a nephew. This nephew who has great expectations from his uncle, who is very rich, assists him in planting and taking up his tulip roots, and affects an admiration for these flowers which, poor creature! he does not really feel, but without which his uncle would not even endure his presence. The uncle is rich, but he is of opinion that it is not safe for young people to have too much money in their pockets. The nephew had contracted a debt which tormented him very much. His creditor threatened to make application to his uncle. He applied to me, and implored me to extricate him from his embarrassment. I was cruel, Sir: flatly refused him. I even took a delight in exaggerating the anger of his uncle if he became acquainted with the disgraceful affair. I threw him into a state of perfect despair, and then said to him: 'Nevertheless, if you are willing, I will give the money you want.'

"'Oh! cried he,—you save my life.'

"'Yes, but on one condition.'

"'A thousand, if you require them!'

"'No; one will do. You will give me an offset of——the tulip in question.'

"He drew back in horror from the proposition. 'My uncle.

cried he, 'would turn me out of doors and disinherit me!'

"'Yes, but he shall know nothing about it—whilst there is no doubt he will soon hear of the debts you have incurred.'

"'But, if he ever should know it!'

"'He never shall, unless you tell him yourself.'

"'But you.'

"In short, I pressed, I terrified the unhappy young man;—he promised to give me an offset when they took up the tulip roots,—but he required my oath on my honour never to name, that which I call Rebecca, to anybody—and to give it another name—till the death of his uncle.

"In exchange for this promise, I gave him the money he wanted.

"Well, we both kept our words; I had the tulip, and I have never named it before any one;—the first time it blossomed here in my garden—being mine—the uncle came to see my tulips. That is a courtesy which amateurs exchange, as you know;—he looked at it and turned pale. 'What do you call this?' said he, in a faltering voice.

"Ah! Sir, I could willingly have paid him back all he had made me suffer! I could have told him —— the name you don't know. But I remembered my promise, my promise on my honour, and the nephew was present, and awaited my answer in an agony, and I replied, 'Rebecca!'

"He, nevertheless, could but observe the resemblance to his tulip;—he was evidently struck, but said nothing;—he praised the rest of my collection, but said not a word in praise of this, the pearl and the diamond of it. He came again the next day—the following day—in short, every day whilst it was in blossom,—but he succeeded in deceiving himself;—he fancied he saw—between Rebecca and the other—some imaginary differences; but he only said, 'It in some degree resembles—you know what.'

"Well, Sir, I have now the tulip I have so much desired, and yet I am not happy. What use is it to me, since I cannot tell anybody? Some deep amateurs nearly recognise it, but I am forced to deny the fact, and I don't meet with one who is so sure as to say to me, You are a liar. I every day undergo frightful torments; I am obliged to hear the praises

of a tulip which I have as well as he. When I am alone, I regale myself with it; I call it by its true name, to which I add the most tender and magnificent epithets. The other day I enjoyed a little pleasure; I pronounced this name—this mysterious name—aloud to a man; but I did not, in this, break my word: this man is deaf, and could not hear a cannon.

"Well, that comforted me a little, but very imperfectly. Nobody knows that I have it—it—look—have pity on me,—my oath oppresses me—swear to me upon your honour, on your part, never to reveal what I am going to say to you; I will then tell you its real name—the true name of Rebecca, of that queen disguised as a grisette. The oath will not be difficult for you to keep; you will have no struggle like mine, Monsieur, it is frightful! I almost wish that this Candaules were dead—that I might say aloud that I have—now do take the oath I ask you to take." I took pity on him, and solemnly promised never to repeat the name of the famous tulip. Then, with an inexpressible feeling of pride, he touched the plant with his wand, and said, "This is ——."

But, on my part, I am bound by an oath; I must not repeat the name he was so happy to pronounce.

LETTER LII.

EACH PLANT HAS ITS OWN TYPE, BUT MEN TRY TO FORM THEMSELVES ON ONE SINGLE TYPE.

If I sometimes appear to prefer trees and plants to men, I will not tell you, as my sole reason, that I owe ever-reviving pleasures to trees and flowers, and that men, with very few exceptions, have always been to me obstacles or enemies; for you know the human heart too well to be satisfied with this reason, and no one could pretend with a worse grace than I, particularly to you, that our affections and antipathies are in direct ratio with the good or evil we have received from the persons or objects which have given birth to them. I, who have given up all my life to one who has done me so much injury; you, who are so fond of melons, which never fail to repay your love for them with horrible cramps in the stomach.

I principally like trees and flowers, because both exhibit themselves to me as they really are, whether near or at a distance, winter or summer. I perceive at a distance a tree covered with blossoms of flat white, and I know that it is a cherry-tree; I know that its rich tufts will bloom under

mild rains and blasts of wind even, after which it will be decked in beautifully shining leaves, among which will grow fruit, first green, then red, which the birds will dispute with me; then the leaves will become ruddy, and fall.

If the tree have rose-coloured flowers, I know that it will give me velvety peaches in the month of September; I know likewise that the leaves are bitter.

But here is a plant which climbs up a trellis;* in summer, it bears little star-shaped flowers of a violet colour, to which succeed girandoles of fruit, which are at first of the colour of the emeralds, and afterwards of that of coral; I know that I have nothing to look for from it beyond the pleasure afforded to the eyes,—for the berries are poisonous.

If I plant the bulb of a hyacinth, I know what colour and what perfume I am to expect; in the same way, if I sow seeds, they will give me the colours and the odours they promise me.

But with men it is very different.

We find in books two or three types of characters, in which romancers have delighted to assemble all perfections even the most contradictory and the most exclusive of one another.

If we could rely upon the first view of this, we should only meet in life with people formed upon these two or three types; all men are, without exception, modest, disinterested, brave, generous, devoted, sensible, &c.

It is a comedy with very little variety, in which every one wishes to play under the same mask. All these virtues are blossoms—wait for the fruits! the fruits!

It is just as if all the trees and plants in the spring time decked themselves with the rose-coloured blossoms of the peach-tree, and afterwards, in autumn, bore the mortal capsules of the thorn-apple, the fox-glove, or the henbane.

Not that I wish any ill to these plants; on the contrary, I love them on account of their beauty; and besides, does not medicine extract even from their poison medicaments of great power and use?

I should not complain of them unless, after having promised by the blossoms of the peach and the cherry to yield me delicious fruits, they gave me afterwards their berries and their capsules, and invited me to eat them.

* *Solanum Dulcamara.* The bittersweet or woody nightshade.

Look into the world; all are chalked out upon the same model, or nearly so.

There are two or three types for a hundred thousand girls, all different one from the other; they have all the same inclinations and the same forms; there is but one type for young people from eighteen to twenty years of age; they have all the same tastes, the same pretensions, and the same mode of arranging their hair; all the mothers afford but one single and the same representation; she is the vigilant hen who only lives for her chickens.

There is something even worse than not having certain qualities, and that is to feign them; certainly, if I had only room for one tree in my garden, and I were obliged to choose between the peach-tree and the thorn-apple, I should determine in favour of the peach; but where is the garden in which there is only room for two trees, or the heart in which there is only room for two affections? And then there are so many gardens, and so many different hearts.

Give me the smallest portion of a plant, half of a leaf, a torn petal, the fragment of a branch, a seed even, and I know at once what I am to expect; that plant promises me such a form, such a colour, such a perfume; if I love its perfume, its colour, its form, it will give them to me in the promised season; if not, I can ask that which I love of another; this one will not be long in meeting with some one who seeks it, and who loves that which it has to give. Now, here is a drawing-room filled with young girls; let us examine them for a minute.

This one is a fair girl; her head is covered with small tresses which escape from the comb and curl of themselves; her dark blue eyes are piercing; her nose is aquiline; her mouth is terminated at the two corners by a strongly-marked line, the upper lip is thin and close, the under lip is short but thick; both are as red as cherries; she has a firm, decided, bold character, she loves risks and dangers.

But being fair she must always be dressed in white; her eyes are constantly cast down, and she will utter piercing cries at the sight of a spider; she is passionately fond of the country and solitude, and declares she could live for ever upon milk and fruit.

Now, here is another whose profile is straight and soft as that of a Greek statue; her figure is slender, tall, almost thin; her hair is brown; her eyes, of a luminous hazel, shed nothing but timid and furtive glances from beneath their long beautifully-pencilled lashes; she is mild and gentle; she really loves repose—the shade of willows by the side of a murmuring stream; she is really capable of profound, eternal, timid and concealed love.

It is a great chance, however, as she happens to be a brunette, if she has not been taught that she must be lively, sparkling, and joyous; but the least that can happen—if both be not compelled to play a part which nature never intended them for—the least that can happen is, that both will be alike: the first will assume a mark that resembles the second, the second will exaggerate her manners and bearing in imitation of the first.

Both are charming as God placed them on the earth; both are disguised and have become a falsehood.

Take twenty young men and set them talking; all have the same tastes, all carry their canes in the same manner, all speak lightly of love and women, all profess to seek rather than avoid quarrels and duels, and to love fiery horses, strong liquors, and potent tobacco.

It will not be before an acquaintance of some duration, that you will discover that one of these young men is a youth of soft sensibility, who was two years before he could summon resolution to slip into the hand of the girl he loves some verses, in which he softened down and diluted as much as possible the sentiments which fill his heart.

That other loves quiet and meditation, and can pour out his full heart in beautiful verses and delicious melodies.

Again, a third *really* dreams of nothing but peace and universal fraternity; he, naturally, would preach and practise concord.

Are you not satisfied that each of these, separately, is preferable to the common type upon which all aim to model themselves?

My creed is not very bitter as regards the wicked; I do not require them to be exterminated, any more than I would pull up my beautiful foxglove, or my splendid thorn-apple;

only I must insist upon their not pretending to be cherry-trees, and that they will not disguise themselves as gooseberry-bushes.

If the potato were to disguise itself, we might attempt to eat its fruit, or to bite its raw roots, but we should soon throw it away in disgust.

Every one has a right to be what he is; every one is best so; every one bears within himself affinities looked for in life by analogous affinities; facets prepared for other corresponding facets, projected, which fall into corresponding hollows. I would willingly love all real personages, I cannot love a mask.

It is the same with animals and insects. The spider pretends no passion for roses; the grub has no particular partiality for flies.

Everything in nature is frankly that which it is; man alone, from vanity, arrives by a singularly circuitous route at the most astonishing degree of humility.

Every one, if he examines himself thoroughly, believes himself to be superior to all others, and does his best to cause this opinion which he entertains of himself to be accepted by the greatest number possible.

He never dreams of what he is seeking to acquire; simply, an incontestable right to the hatred of all he may persuade to agree with him, and the ridicule of those whom he does not persuade.

Every one believes himself superior to others, and yet no one appears as he really is. How is this contradiction to be explained?

That woman believes herself to be the most charming of women; she speaks of others with the utmost disdain, and yet she never moves a step without being completely disguised, without displaying a figure differing widely from her own, without studying a carriage which is not natural to her.

Of what then is she so proud? Of her beauty? She cannot have faith in that, because she takes such pains to alter it. What vanity and what humility!

Ask that man, into the skin of which of his contemporaries he would most wish to enter;—but I mean his real skin, not in a skin of riches, dignities, &c.;—ask him if he should like

to be Mr Any-one, with not only his fortune, his rank, or his reputation; but if he should like to change minds, noses, teeth, and names with him. If he tell you the truth, there will always be something which he will wish to reserve, something in which he feels himself superior to all others: lead him to talk a little more, and he will not fail to let you perceive that the things in which he acknowledges himself inferior, are things about which he cares very little; that real qualities and perfections, such as are worth the trouble of wishing for, such as truly deserve admiration, are precisely those by which he believes he bears it away.

I would tell you to put this question to yourself; but although there is some chance of making another person speak truth if you happen to be more cunning or more skilful than he, I fear there is very little chance of making a man speak truth to himself.

Well; this man so happy, so proud of being precisely himself, he never exhibits himself such as he really is, either morally or physically: he will boast of talents which he does not possess, and conceal qualities he, perhaps, might justly claim merit for. Take him upon all points, and, with a little address, you will make him, by fractions, disown himself three times over.

I again ask, how is it possible to be at the same time so proud and so humble, and of the self-same things?

What vanity and what humility!

"Every man possesses three characters: that which he exhibits, that which he really has, and that which he believes he has."

The Silkworm Moth.

LETTER LIII.

MAN THE MONARCH OF CREATION—THE VIOLET AND ITS PROPRIETORS.

MAN pretends to be the king of all nature. When I look at things closely, this monarch, so vain of his power, appears to me to have a singular resemblance to certain bishops, styled *in partibus infidelium*—that is to say, whose bishoprics, in the power of infidels, are so situated, that if chance should offer them an opportunity of appearing in them, they could not avoid being broiled, hung, quartered, or impaled.

I do not here speak of animals, who, if man ventures too near to their den, eagerly avail themselves of the opportunity of regaling upon a monarch raw, or in his own gravy.

I mean the innocent pretenders, who share with man the

empire of the things of the earth, and, generally, leave him nothing but their refuse.

Here we are, by chance, returned to my violet-filled turf. You, my good friend, king of nature as of all the world, you think that the violet was only made to recreate your eyes by its green foliage, and its amethyst-coloured flowers but to intoxicate your brain with its perfume. Permit me to undeceive you. The violet serves as an asylum and as food to insects without number; they are not so large as you, it is true, but if you pride yourself upon this advantage, you must give way to the ox and the elephant, and also to your gardener, or your butcher, who are bigger and stronger than you.

I do not intend to fatigue you with a long nomenclature of the insects that haunt the violet, for which it is a shelter, a retreat, and a sumptuous well-furnished table.

Here, gnawing away with all his heart at the leaves of the flower of Io, is a grey caterpillar, with white and reddish thorns; it will become a butterfly, of which the upper side of the superior wings is of a marigold yellow, and the under part of the inferior wings is ornamented with fourteen silver spots. I do not know its name.*

Here is another caterpillar; in general, caterpillars, out of contempt I suppose, are not honoured with names; the butterfly, into which this will be metamorphosed, is called *Euphrosyne:*† the upper side of its wings will be fawn-coloured, the under part of the inferior wings will be spotted with silver, like those of the other, but it will only have nine of these brilliant spots. The caterpillar is black, with two rows of yellow spots.

This other brown caterpillar, with yellowish spots, will become a butterfly, called *Spanish snuff;* its name indicates its colour; it will become a denizen of the air in the month of July.

The Aglaë‡ will take flight about the middle of June; at present it is still a black caterpillar with white bands; as a butterfly, it will be fawn-coloured and yellow.

And this olive-tinted caterpillar, with a white band bor-

* Argynnis Niobe?—Ed. † Melitœa Euphrosyne.—Ed.
‡ Argynnis Aglaia.—Ed.

dered with black points, will become a fawn-coloured moth, spotted with black, with a few silver eyes, and is called Adippe.*

These are the guests, the inhabitants, and the *master* of the violet.

In vain the Athenians consecrated it to themselves, and engraved it on tablets everywhere in the city of Athens with it: in vain, according to Aristophanes, the orators flattered the people, by calling them *Athenians crowned with violets*—an epithet which I can only compare to one which Homer so frequently bestows upon the Greeks, calling them at least twenty times in the course of the Iliad, Ἐυκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί, the well-greaved Greeks: in vain, in some cities of Germany, this flower is still consecrated to the coffins of virgins;—the insects we have just seen are the masters of the violet before men, and only leave them as much of it as they do not want.

* Argynnis Adippe.—Ed.

LETTER LIV.

FLOWERS AND THEIR PROPRIETORS.

And the honeysuckle!

The honeysuckle, whose odours I have so often breathed—the honeysuckle, which intoxicates me—which every year brings back so many sweet and melancholy thoughts—that, wherever I chance to meet with it, the honeysuckle appears to me to be my own particular flower. Well, it really belongs to the *Sphinx fuciformis*, a moth, whose body is green, with wings transparent in the centre, and of a brown colour round the edges; the caterpillar is green with a brownish red horn.

It belongs to the moth *sibilla*, previously a green caterpillar, with its head and bristles inclined to red; afterwards a brown, white and dull-blue-coloured butterfly.

It belongs to the *blue sylvan*, which is of a black-blue with a white band; and to I don't know how many flies, and to a particular species of aphis, &c. &c.

Do you fancy that the alder, yonder beautiful tree growing on the verge of the rivulet, was only made to cover you with its shade during the sultry hours of the day?

Fluminibus . . . alni
Nascuntur.

Do you really suppose it has nothing else to do than to provide ladders, wooden shoes, and stakes for you? No, no; the

alder nourishes numerous insects, and among the rest, the one called the *alder moth*,—why, the whole of the alder belongs to it! This moth, whose wings are yellow sprinkled with brown, has previously been a very singular caterpillar: its shape, its colour, everything, resembles a little portion of an alder-branch of the preceding year, already dried and withered.

Do you imagine that cresses have no other destination but to surround the roast-fowls on your table? No; in cresses, a green caterpillar, ornamented with three white lines, conceals, feeds, and is metamorphosed into a charming moth with wings, each enriched with two orange spots.

Close to our feet is a scabious, that dark flower which we have already met with and spoken of,—do you think it has no moth peculiar to itself? The *maturne*, at first a black caterpillar with three yellow lines; then a brown, yellow, and black moth:—the *artemisia*, a black caterpillar with white points; then a brown, yellow and red moth: and the *Sphinx bombiciformis*, whose body is painted with a black and a purple band.

The *epilobe*, which grows close to the water, at the foot of the alder—does not it nourish the brown caterpillar, (ornamented with two spots of violet-tinted white, and six grey stripes, with a white-pointed black horn,) which is transformed into the *vine sphinx*, that charming green and rose-coloured moth?

The colchicum, in the autumn, enamels the meadows with its little lilac-coloured lilies. The flowers spring from the earth, without being accompanied by leaves; without being supported by stalks: the ovary remains in the earth; the stamens shed their pollen upon it; the flower disappears beneath the snow—and it is not till the following spring, that a tuft of large broad leaves, of a beautiful green, is seen issuing from the earth, amidst which appear the seeds which have ripened underground. The leaves die and disappear a long time before the new flowers appear. All parts of the colchicum are injurious; but the bulb is deadly poison. Its flavour, at first insipid, becomes hot and sharp; soon after it has been eaten, violent vomitings and cold sweats ensue, followed by death in a few hours.

Man, when sometimes checked in his singular ideas relative

to the royalty over nature which he attributes to himself, asks himself what is the use of certain plants which he cannot eat, or of certain animals which eat him; and in his hypocritical submission to the decrees of Providence, imagines that these animals, or these plants, contain for him some concealed utility, which he seeks with pertinacity, and hopes some day to discover.

He would avoid racking his brain on the subject, if he would but renounce the foolish pride which makes him believe that he is the centre and the aim of all that exists. The bulbs of the colchicum, which are mortal to man and cattle, are eagerly sought for by moles, those subterranean travellers, who consider them as the best and most wholesome food for their young.

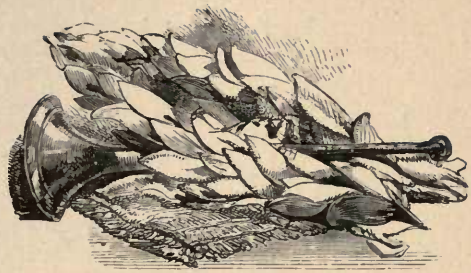
Here is, however—for the truth must be told in a journey like mine,—here is a plant that no insect, no animal attacks; it is the *paquerette*, or Easter daisy,* that ornament of the fields, with golden disc and rays of silver, spread in such profusion at our feet; nothing is so humble, nothing is so much respected.

There are other daisies, calm autumn flowers, called China asters. Around their yellow disc they exhibit rays of all the shades of rose and violet, sometimes white, or white and violet, or white and rose-coloured; it is a rich but melancholy flower. It is, beyond contradiction, the most beautiful of the *asters*; a family which, with the chrysanthemums, completes the rich coronet of the year.

The aster came to us from China about a hundred years ago.

The Mole. *Talpa vulgaris.*

* *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum.* The moon-daisy.



LETTER LV.

THE GROUNDSEL—LAUREL—LIBERTY, FRATERNITY, AND EQUALITY.

It is evident that groundsel was created for the birds of the fields: as man has determined, as I told you yesterday, to refer everything to himself; he has imagined the following use for groundsel:—You have the tooth-ache; groundsel was made expressly to cure your tooth-ache.—Pull up a root of groundsel, cut through the root with a razor or a very sharp knife, replant the groundsel, and preserve only the portion you have cut off, and which you must apply three or four times to your ailing tooth; it is very probable you will be cured, says Pliny; but that depends upon a condition; the groundsel that you have replanted after having mutilated its root, must continue to vegetate and to do well; if it should die, your tooth will give you more pain than ever.

Let us stop a little;—here is the laurel of the poets,* the laurel of triumphant conquerors!—but, alas! also the laurel of *hams!* But there is another more humble laurel, which serves likewise to crown victors, and which has escaped the disgrace of being employed in sauces, and in decorating the smoked members of an impure animal; it is the Alexandrine

* *Laurus nobilis.* The bay-tree.—Ed.

laurel,* which only grows in the shade of other trees, and the representation of which we meet with upon ancient medals and monuments.

The laurel, as it is said, was formerly a safeguard against thunder: in this respect, it appears to me to have been advantageously displaced by the lightning conductor; it has never been a safeguard against envy or hatred, which, on the contrary, it seems to attract with an invincible power: the true crown of genius has always been a crown of thorns,—but of that beautiful perfumed thorn which blooms in the spring, and which conceals its ensanguined spikes beneath its festoons of white flowers.

Another reputation enjoyed by the laurel was, that of procuring agreeable dreams, by the placing of some of its leaves under the pillow; a saying which I mean to put to the test one of these nights.

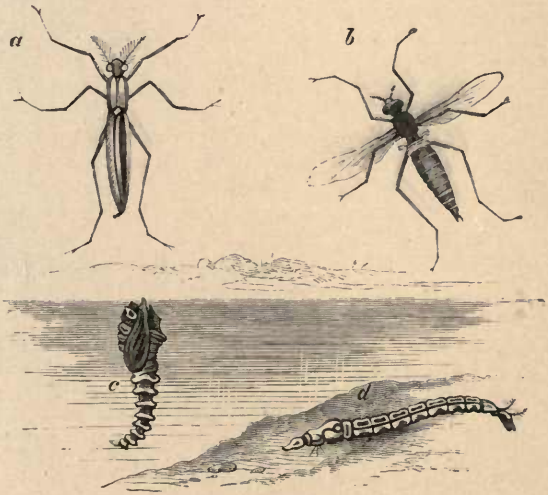
Now-a-days, all greatness and power are overthrown, under the pretext of equality. Equality is an absurdity; but if possible it would be desirable that it should be sought for, rather by elevating the low than by abasing the great, as is the fashion; by raising the strawberries and hazels to the height of oaks, instead of cutting down the oaks to a level with the strawberries and the hazels; but man is not so much the enemy of slavery as he pretends to be.

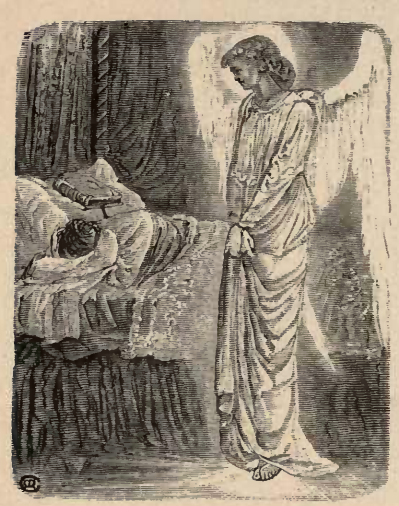
Kings and men of genius are cast into the mire; but we worship singers and dancers; not only those that are beautiful, which is after all a great superiority, a great power and a legitimate royalty, natural and incontestable; but also the most meagre, the most ugly, the most yellow among them; and simply because they are singers and dancers. Formerly they were paid with money and diamonds; now we heap flowers upon them, and drag their carriages through the streets.

Everything is for them, even consideration. I should now-a-days be laughed at, if I said that which is incontestable, that the poorest and humblest wife of an artisan or mechanic is a thousand times above the richest, the most beautiful, and the most skilful of these women; lower than whom I can discover none but the imbeciles who worship them and crown them with flowers and love.

* *Ruscus androgynus.*

I am this day forty years old: I have seen two political revolutions; and I shall see at least another. After I have seen the third it is probable I shall say exactly as I said after the other two: "Abuses are not attacked for the purpose of removing them, but of conquering them. The more frequently things change, the more they continue to be the same things."





LETTER LVI.

DREAMLAND.

Ah! my friend; I am just returned from such a beautiful country! Now, will it be possible for me to remember all the wonders I have there seen?

In the first place, the trees bore fruits which exhaled unknown perfumes; some had blossoms of fire, and in these flowers were bees of gold, whose humming was an enchanting music.

Scarcely had I entered these happy regions when I felt the influence of the climate: I became lively and light; I no longer walked; I flew, and perched upon the very tops of the trees.

In this land I found all that I had lost by death or forgetfulness; I found them all living, all happy, and all loving me with a delightful tenderness; they were all young and handsome. There I beheld all the things I had dreamt of, or desired,

and which I had rejected from my thoughts and my heart as the follies and visions of a diseased brain; I saw them realized, and considered ordinary and common; no one was astonished at them, and I not more than others. At my call, lions and tigers came and rubbed themselves against me, and offered to bear me on their backs; but what need had I of their assistance, I who could fly like an eagle myself!

There I found my Magdeleine, Magdeleine who loved me, and made it clear to me that she had never been unfaithful. Oh, unspeakable happiness! I do not know what she said to me, nor what arguments she made use of; all I know is, that I entirely believed her.

And M. Muller too; how he shook my hand; how delighted he was with our happiness. And my father, my father for whom I had wept so bitterly, he was not dead, he had only gone to wait for me in this blessed country, wherein all I had ever loved were assembled; he still wore his smiling, cheerful, open countenance, and from his fingers still poured forth floods of harmony.

It appeared to me that till that time my life had been nothing but a dream and a nightmare; or that after difficult proofs and an initiation, the phantoms which had terrified me were all dispersed.

I was rich, and I lavished upon Magdeleine everything that woman loves, everything that we love so dearly to give her. Upon what magnificent jewellery, upon what beautiful stuffs, upon what carpets, and upon what flowers she walked! What pearls were entwined in the manes of the horses which dragged her carriage! Oh! how beautiful she was! How was she adorned with all these riches, and how was I adorned by her! Precious stones and diamonds surrounded her, and sparkled beneath her feet; but neither diamonds nor precious stones were deemed worthy of glittering upon her. I gave her stars to place in her hair; Mars, that red star; and Venus, that blue star which I had so long seen shining in the heavens, were not, as they are called elsewhere, large planets; no, they were like flowers of fire, which became her delightfully.

Then, as I examined her more closely, I discovered that she was at the same time all the women I have loved in the course of my life. Then our looks were fixed upon each

other; the fire that issued from our eyes met and was mingled; I became her and she became me; I felt her blood in my veins; I then at once became aware of what love really is—a flame separated in two which endeavours to unite again.

Oh, the beautiful country! nobody took any notice of us; nobody envied our happiness; we thought of nobody.

And what a beautiful blue the sky was of!

This country, my friend, you may visit it as I have done, where you are, just as if you were here this evening, if it be agreeable to you; only give directions that no imbecile individual should come and awaken you by knocking too early at your door in the morning, as I was served.

Because if there *is* a stunning fall, it is that which we make in descending from the smiling regions of dreams into this arid country which we call life.

If we consider the matter well, however, who knows, if after that which we call death, we shall not learn, that that which was really a dream was what we called life; whilst what we took for dreams were excursions which our souls made, whilst our body, that prison of flesh, remained in the country of real life.

LETTER LVII.

AROMATIC PLANTS—SCIENTIFIC NOMENCLATURE.

HERE is a thorny tree, with narrow leaves, of a bluish grey, which is called *hippophäe.*

J. J. Rousseau relates that one day, as he was herborising on the banks of the Isère, he ate some of the yellow fruits of this tree. An advocate of Grenoble, who accompanied him, did not dare to take the liberty of warning him that these fruits were supposed to be poisonous.—Happily they are not so.

Almost all trees, almost all plants will have their share of sun; all require air. The *fragon,** almost alone, is more modest; it is only under trees that it grows with vigour into tufted bushes. The fragon, from a distance, has the appearance of a myrtle, but each of its leaves is terminated by a sharp point. In the spring its little flowers, green and violet, do not bloom as other shrubs do, at the extremity of a peduncle, but upon the leaves themselves. To these flowers succeed little green, round fruits. When winter arrives, the fragon, which has remained green under the bare trees, is covered all over with little red balls, as large as small cherries, nut of a coral red.

* *Ruscus aculeatus.* The knee holly or butcher's broom

The Alexandrine laurel, of which I spoke to you not long since, and which shares with the bay the glory of crowning victors, is a sort of fragon.

Thyme, like the fragon, takes upon itself to embellish the parts of the earth which other plants disdain. If there is an arid, stony, dry soil, burnt up by the sun, it is there thyme spreads its charming green beds, perfumed, close, thick, elastic, scattered over with little balls of blossom, of a pink colour, and of a delightful freshness.

Thyme and the fragon have often inspired me with lively sentiments of gratitude;—they are two beautiful presents from heaven. When we admire other plants, we may think that if chance had not placed them where they are, their place would be occupied by others,—whilst upon the spot in which the fragon displays its evergreen foliage, and its beads of coral, there would be nothing but the bare earth;—there, where the thyme spreads its green and pink beds, there would be nothing but clay.

Balm, thyme, savory, lavender, and rosemary, grow in preference upon the driest lands, and the most burning rocks. Thyme has its moth, called the *thyme moth*—the balm is a great favourite with bees: the Greeks called it honey-leaf. An insect in the shape of a little green tortoise, a *cassida*, inhabits the blossoms of the balm.

Whilst we are upon aromatic plants, we must not fail to seek for the mint. But, besides that, there are several species of mint; we must quit the dry part of the garden, and return to the banks of the rivulet and the pool, where we shall find the mint-balms, of which one is aquatic, both bearing flowers of the grey of the heliotrope, the aquatic in round clusters, the other in spikes.

But the true mint is peppermint, that whose hot and pungent flavour is followed by an agreeable coldness. Otherwise it resembles the preceding, only it has not, as they have, any down upon its leaves.

There is a history attached to mint.

It is well known that Pluto, god of the infernal regions, bore off Proserpine. Ceres set out in search of her daughter, and complained to Jupiter. Jupiter pronounced, that Proserpine should be restored to her mother, if she had eaten nothing

since her entrance into the kingdom of darkness. One Ascalaphus declared he had seen her put three pomegranate seeds into her mouth. Proserpine remained queen of hell, and Ascalaphus was changed into an owl, as a reward for his meddling.

It may easily be imagined that Pluto in time became cooler in his admiration of a wife whom he had had such difficulty to keep when he had won her; but, however that may be, it was pretty well known that he was not insensible to the attractions of a young virgin named Mentha, daughter of the old river Cocytus.

Several daughters of rivers were beloved by the gods, but, in general, their fathers took care to transform them into something insensible in the moment of danger. Syrinx, pursued by the god Pan, was changed into a reed; Daphne, on the point of being caught by Apollo, was metamorphosed into a laurel. So Apollo crowned himself with laurel; Pan made himself a pipe of reed.

Old Cocytus was less careful—the god was successful; but Proserpine surprised the lovers, and changed the nymph into the plant which bears her name.

Two cassidas and a chrysomel, a sort of blue beetle, take up their abode in the aquatic mint.

I am very much embarrassed when I wish to give a correct idea of an insect or a plant; to you, particularly, who have never taken delight in either botany or entomology. If I explain to you one word with which you are unacquainted, by another of which you are equally ignorant, I cannot be said to assist your progress in knowledge greatly; if, on the contrary, I try to find a similitude between that which I want you to understand and something that you already know, I run the danger of angering the learned, by the use of improper terms.

If I were to tell you that the chrysomeles is one of the coleoptera, whose *antennæ* are articulated globularly, the body oval, the *corslet* wide and fringed at the sides, the *elytra* generally adorned with brilliant colours, you would be very little the wiser—unless I told you that by *coleoptera* I mean insects which have hard *elytra;* by *elytra*, the cases of the wings; by *articles,* the divisions of the *antennæ;* the *antennæ* the kind

of moveable horns which the insect bears in the front of its head.

This would do very well for once; but if, at every insect we meet with, it were necessary for me to make you undergo a sentence in a foreign language, and then a translation with dictionary fragments, you would soon cease to listen to me; besides, all these words, whatever trouble we may give ourselves in explaining them, convey very little to those who have not seen the objects.

If, on the contrary, by straining the sense a little, I try to confine the ideas which I wish to make you comprehend within the circle of the somewhat too general ideas which you always possess; if, on your account, I call every four-winged insect covered with coloured dust, a butterfly, when perhaps it is a night-moth, a phalæna, a sphynx, &c. &c.

If I designate every insect having its wings covered with two hard cases under the vague designation of a beetle, I may make myself sufficiently understood by you, who do not require science of me; but I offend the learned, and my language would be as ridiculous for them as that of a foreigner who would write: You have always had for me *des boyaux de père;* instead of saying, *des entrailles de père.**

I must, however, tell the learned, that, thanks to their austerity and their dignity, even well informed people, finding the first step of the ladder to a special science too elevated, are frequently discouraged, and do not attempt to mount it. Whilst an ignorant fellow, like me, who has seen some of the learned, and who has carefully preserved all the crumbs they have been kind enough to drop before him, goes to seek people in a state of ignorance, whose language he knows and does not despise, and brings them to the foot of the ladder; the rest is your concern.

If I should publish this journey round my garden, it would go further in rendering entomology and botany familiar than the largest and best books published by the learned.

Science is a steep island, surrounded by a few more rocks than are necessary, to which every *savant* makes it a pleasure

* An untranslateable sentence, best explained as being analogous to that of the French Author, who translated "Love's last shift," (the title of an old comedy,) by La dernière chemise de l'amour.—TRANS.

and a duty to add some asperities. I pass people over in a light wherry; I transport them from the opposite shore to the banks of your isle, it remains for you then to hold out your hand to them, if it be true that you wish to people your isle, (of which I sometimes feel inclined to doubt,) when I observe in what a manner you every day make access to it more difficult.

LETTER LVIII.

THE YELLOW ROSES.

HERE is a yellow rose-tree which reminds me of a story.

I went one evening, two years ago, to pass a few hours at the house of an old, amiable, intellectual and indulgent lady, who lives near me; she is passionately fond of flowers, and you can scarcely guess how much coquetry I exercise in making bouquets for her; how delighted I am with her astonishment when I carry her a flower she is not acquainted with, or one that is not common in our country.

On my arrival there yesterday, I found with her an old gentleman, who, about a year since, took possession of a large property left to him by a distant relation, upon the condition of his bearing the name of it, and who is consequently called M. Descoudraies.

He got introduced to my old friend, and I soon had reason to be jealous of his assiduities; they quickly conceived a

friendship for each other, and passed almost all their evenings together playing at backgammon.

I bowed in silence, that I might not interrupt the conversation, and when it was finished presented to Madame Lorgerel a bouquet of yellow roses which I had brought with me.

My roses were very fine ones, in addition to which, the rain of that year caused roses to bloom badly; mine, sheltered by a projecting roof, were, perhaps, the only yellow roses in the neighbourhood that had blossomed well. Madame Lorgerel was delighted with her beautiful bouquet.

M. Descoudraies said nothing, but he appeared absent and a little agitated. I looked at him with astonishment, being quite unable to comprehend the mysterious influence of my yellow roses; but Madame Lorgerel spoke of something else, and I believed I must have been mistaken.

As for M. Descoudraies, he smiled, and would have laughed, but it did not amount to a laugh, and said:—

"Would you believe that this bouquet has just called up, as if by a magic operation, an entire epoch of my youth?

"During five minutes I have been twenty years old, during five minutes I have again become in love with a lady, who, if she be still alive, must be sixty. I must tell you this story, it is a circumstance that has exercised a great influence over my life, and the remembrance of which, even now, when my blood has no more warmth left than just to enable me to live and play at backgammon, does not fail to agitate me in an extraordinary manner.

"I was twenty; that is rather more than forty years ago. I had but just left college, at which young men stayed rather later than they do at present.* After having deliberated seriously for me, but without consulting me, upon the choice of a profession, my father one morning announced to me that he had procured me a lieutenancy in a regiment then in garrison in a city of Auvergne, and desired me to be ready to join it in three days.

"I was greatly disconcerted on many accounts; in the first place, I had no liking for a military life, but that was an

* The reader must bear in mind, that the "colleges" mentioned in this and other places are analogous to our public schools, such as Harrow and Eton.

objection that might have been quickly overcome; the sight of a handsome uniform, a few ambitious sentences, and a little music might have easily made an Achilles or a Cæsar of me.

"But I was in love!

"On no consideration in the world would I have ventured to say a word of this to my father; his only reply to my confidence would have been to order me to set out that very evening.

"But I had an uncle. What an uncle he was!

"He was a man of nearly the same age that I am now; but he was still young, not for himself but for others; for never did an old man resign to Satan his pomps, works, and vanities with a better grace. He loved young people; he understood them without being jealous of them. He did not believe that infirmities were a progress, or that old age was necessarily wisdom. By the force of goodness and reason, he lived upon the happiness of others. He was mixed up with all the generous follies, all the noble extravagances of youth; he was the confidant and protector of all lovers, the assistant in cases of debt, the encourager of hopes.

"I went to his house, and saluted him with,—

"'Dear uncle, I am very unfortunate.'

"'I will bet twenty louis you are not,' said he.

"'Dear uncle, don't joke. Besides, you would lose.'

"'If I lose I will pay; and that perhaps will help to console you.'

"'No, uncle; money has nothing to do with my grief.'

"'Well, tell it me, then.'

"'My father has just announced to me that I am a lieutenant in the regiment of ——'

"'Pretty misfortune that, to be sure. One of the handsomest uniforms in the army; the officers all gentlemen.'

"'But, uncle, I don't wish to be a soldier.'

"'What! you don't wish to be a soldier? Perhaps you are deficient in courage?'

"'I scarcely know yet, uncle; nevertheless, you are the only person I would allow to put such a question to me.'

"'Well, brave Cid! and my very good friend, why are you unwilling to be a soldier?'

"'Because I wish to be married.'

"'Bah!'

"'It is very well for you to say, Bah! I am in love!'

"'Do you call that a misfortune, you ungrateful young scoundrel? Why, I should like to be in love myself, over head and ears. And, pray who is the object of such a brilliant flame?'

"'Dear uncle, she is an angel!'

"'Oh! I knew that before; it is always an angel. In a little time you will love a woman better than an angel. But what earthly name does this angel reply to?'

"'Her name, uncle, is Noémi.'

"'That's not what I asked you. Noémi; that's all your own,—it's a pretty name, though. But for me, who want to know who this angel is, and to what family she belongs, a family name is necessary.'

"'It is Mademoiselle Amelot, uncle.'

"'Indeed! that's better than an angel! A tall, slender, graceful brunette, with eyes of black velvet. I can't say I disapprove of the object at all.'

"'Ah! dear uncle, if you did but know her mind and heart!'

"'Ah, yes! I know all about that. And thou art paid in return, as we used to say formerly? Is that the phrase with you fellows, now-a-days?'

"'Really, uncle, I do not know.'

"'Not know! thou nephew unworthy of thine uncle! You are every day creeping into the house, and don't know whether you are loved!'

"'She does not even know that I love her, uncle.'

"'Oh! in that respect you are deceived, fair nephew; and show that you understand nothing of the matter. She knew you loved her, at least a quarter of an hour before you knew it yourself.'

"'Uncle, all that I know is, that I shall kill myself, if she be not mine.'

"'Oh, oh! as strong as that, fair nephew, is it? Humph! there are many chances against her being yours. Your father is much richer than hers, and will not bestow his son upon her.'

" ' Well then, uncle, I know what remains for me to do.'

" ' Nonsense: let us see: don't commit any folly; at least listen to me.'

" ' Yes, uncle.'

" ' Well, in the first place, you cannot marry at twenty.'

" ' Why not, uncle?'

" ' Because I won't let you; and without me this marriage will never take place.'

" ' Oh, my dear, good little uncle!——'

" ' If the girl loves you—if she promises to wait three years for you——'

" ' Three years, uncle!'

" ' Don't begin to argue about it, or I shall insist upon four. If she will promise to wait three years for you, you will join your regiment.'

" ' Ah, uncle!—uncle!'

" ' But not at Clermont; I will contrive to have you placed in a regiment at a few leagues from Paris, whither you can come once in every three months.'

" ' Well, uncle; but how am I to know if she loves me?'

" ' How are you to know! Why by asking her, to be sure.

" ' Dear uncle, I dare not.'

" ' Then pack up your kit, and obey your father.'

" ' But, dear uncle, you don't know what sort of a girl she is. I have wished a hundred times to tell her I loved her; I have been ashamed of my own timidity; I have endeavoured to obtain courage in all ways; I have prepared speeches, and learnt them by heart; I have written letters: but when an opportunity offered for speaking to her, I felt the first word choke me, and I spoke of something else. Her look is so mild, but at the same time so severe, it appeared to me that she could never love a man; and then I spoke of something else. As for letters, it is still worse: at the moment I should give them, I fancy them so silly, that I cannot believe I can tear them into pieces small enough.'

" ' Well, but, my boy, the matter must be decided; and I will tell you why: your father has not let you into the whole affair. One of his reasons for sending you to Clermont is that the colonel of the regiment is one of his most intimate friends, and has a daughter: this daughter is destined for

you; it is a rich and suitable match. But——you need say nothing about it; I know that all this amounts to nothing when a man is in love. It is a great folly, but it is a folly I should be sorry not to have committed myself: they must be cold-blooded mortals who do not commit such. I know very well that old folks call this illusions; but who knows if it be not they who have some of these illusions? The spectacles that lessen objects are not more true than those which enlarge them.

" ' If she loves you, you must sacrifice everything for her sake: that's a folly, I know; but it is right, and must be done. But you must ascertain if she loves you; and there is just now an excellent opportunity for putting the question. Her family are about to marry her to another——Well, nephew, you turn pale at that idea, and you would like to measure swords with your odious rival. Is not that what you said just now? Well, try to preserve a little of this great courage in the presence of the beautiful Noémi. They want to marry her: you are richer than she is, but the man they wish to marry her to is richer than you; besides, he has a title, and is a husband quite ready, and the *corbeille* is ready; whilst for you they must wait. Go to Noémi, and tell her you love her: she knows it well enough, but it is expected to be told. Ask her if she responds to your affection, and tell her she ought to love you; you are young, handsome, and sensible. Tell her that she shall swear to you to wait three years for you, and that she shall write it to me—to me myself, in a letter, which I will keep. Then I will break off the marriage yonder; I will get you placed in another regiment; and in three years, in spite of your father, in spite of the "Bah!" in spite of everything, I will marry you.'

" ' Dear uncle, I have an idea.'

" ' What is it?'

" ' I will write to her.'

" ' As you please.'

" I left my uncle, and instantly set about my letter. There was no difficulty in the writing—I had already written her a hundred and fifty; but it was the delivery of the letter that embarrassed me. Nevertheless, as there was no time to be

lost in hesitation, I fixed upon a plan: I purchased a bouquet of yellow roses, and placed my billet in the middle of the bouquet.

"Stop—perhaps it is being very foolish, but I still remember the contents of it. After the avowal of my love, I supplicated her to love me in return, to be happy with me, and to wait for me three years. I entreated her, if she consented, to wear in her bosom in the evening one of my yellow roses. Then, said I, I shall have courage to speak to you, and will tell you all you have to do to secure my happiness: I dare not say *our* happiness."

"What! did you put the billet in the bouquet?" said Madame Lorgerel.

"Yes, Madame."

"And then?"

"And then, in the evening Noémi did not wear a yellow rose in her bosom. I was near killing myself. My uncle dragged me away to Clermont, in spite of myself; he remained with me two months, mingled with the young officers, and finished by diverting my thoughts, and convincing me that Noémi had never loved me.

"'But, uncle,' said I, 'she always appeared so glad when I arrived, and made such gentle reproaches when I came late.'

"'Ah! women love to have the love of all the world; but there are persons whom they don't love.'

"In short, in the end, I nearly forgot her; and then I married the daughter of the colonel, whom I lost after a union of eight years; and here I am now, left quite alone. My uncle has been dead a long while. Well, would you believe that I still think frequently of Noémi; and what is most curious is, that she always presents herself before me as a young girl of seventeen, with her beautiful brown hair, and, as my uncle said, her black velvet eyes; whereas she must now be, if living, quite an old woman."

"You do not know what became of her?"

"No, Madame."

"Well, but your name was not then Descoudraies?"

"No; that is the name of my uncle's estate. My name was Edmond d'Altheim."

"Just so."

"How, Madame, just so?"

"I will tell you what is become of Noémi."

"You will, Madam?"

"Yes; she loved you."

"But the yellow rose?"

"She never saw the billet. Your sudden departure cost her much grief and many tears; but, like you, she married—Monsieur de Lorgerel."

"M. De Lorgerel!"

"Yes, M. de Lorgerel, whose widow I now am."

"What, you!—What! you, Noémi Amelot?"

"Alas! yes, as you are, or rather as you no longer are, Edmond d'Altheim."

"Who could ever have believed that the day would come when we should not recognise each other?"

"Yes, is it not strange? And only to meet to play at backgammon?"

"But the bouquet?"

"The bouquet—here it is. I have always kept it."

And Madame Lorgerel fetched an ebony box from an escritoire, which she opened.

She took out a faded bouquet. She trembled.

"Untie it, untie it!" said M. Descoudraies.

She untied the bouquet, and found the billet, which had been there forty-two years.

Both remained silent. I wished to leave them. M. Descoudraies arose. Madame de Lorgerel took him by the hand and said, "You are right. This renewal of the youth of our hearts must not take place before two old faces like ours. Let us avoid casting this ridicule upon a noble sentiment, which will perhaps afford us happiness for the rest of our lives. Do not come again till after the expiration of a few days."

From that time, old M. Descoudraies and old Madame de Lorgerel are seldom apart; I have never witnessed anything like the sentiment that exists between them. They go over again and again all the little details of that love which was never told; they have a thousand things to relate, they are in love retrospectively: they wish to be married, but they dare not marry.

LETTER LIX.

ORIGIN AND PROPERTIES OF CERTAIN PLANTS—THEIR COLOURS ONLY COMPARATIVE—END OF THE TOUR.

MANY controversies have taken place with respect to the heliotrope, the flower whose umbels, of a greyish blue, exhale such a sweet odour of vanilla.

It is related that the nymph Clytie, the daughter of Oceanus, was abandoned by Apollo, whom she had loved. This threw her into such deep grief that she ceased to eat or to drink, and died with her eyes fixed upon the sun. She was changed into a flower called *heliotrope*. Now heliotrope signifies, *I turn towards the sun.*

Some *savants* have determined that it was not our heliotrope with the vanilla odour, that was spoken of when alluding to the metamorphoses of Clytie, but of the great

sunflower, sometimes called *turnsole*, which implies just the same thing as heliotrope. But there is a trifling inconvenience attached to this solution, which is, that the sunflower comes to us from Peru, and that in the time of Ovid Peru was not known.

If we seek for another flower to which to attribute the history of Clytie, that is another embarrassment, with the indication you have, that it is a flower which turns towards the sun.

Point out to me any flower that does *not* turn towards the sun. Put all you please into a chamber that has but one opening, and you will see, not only their flowers, but their leaves, nay, their stalks, seek the air, daylight, and the sun.

The wild heliotrope which resembles the cultivated heliotrope, excepting in the smell, is often sold under the pretence that it has the quality of curing warts, which is not true.

This time I will not forget it; I will clear up the phenomena of the fraxinella. As soon as day disappears, I will set fire to the inflammable air that surrounds it. In the meanwhile, here we are under the horse-chestnut-trees. Some bear spikes of white flowers, others spikes of rose-coloured flowers. The horse-chestnut-tree is originally from Constantinople, whence it was sent into Austria in 1594, and brought to Paris in 1613, by a M. Bachelier, the same who brought the anemones, as I told you.

Men, who in general render great worship to beauty, are, I know not why, ashamed of this worship, and invent for that which they think beautiful all sorts of moral and useful qualities, often sufficiently apocryphal. On the other side, there is nothing concerning which one part of mankind does not seek to deceive the others.

It was from these two united causes, no doubt, that attempts were made to manufacture, but more particularly to sell, soap made of the fruit of the horse-chestnut-tree. Then they undertook to feed cattle upon it. The latter did, in the end, eat it, but with great dislike, and after long and almost starving hesitation; they preferred hunger to death, but very little.

The millepertuis for a long time was supposed to possess the power of driving away demons; it is now-a-days satisfied with displaying some pretty clusters of yellow flowers, and with presenting the singular appearance of leaves perforated with an infinite number of little holes.

* St John's wort. *Hypericum*

Here shines the scarlet-geranium; its splendid colour dazzles the eyes; it would appear to be the *sovereign red.* Take a flower of it and place it by the side of the little scarlet verbena of Miquilon, which creeps among the magnolias, those trees which bear lilies upon heath land, and variegate it with sparkling little umbels. Place near one of these umbels the blossom of the geranium, and by a singular metamorphosis, the geranium is no longer red, it becomes yellow, its red is subdued and destroyed by the red of the verbena. The verbena, in its turn, will pale before the cardinal lobelia. All which proves that things are only red as they are great by the side of those which are less red and less great. The greatness of great men is made more than half of the littleness of the others.

By the side of the marigold of the gardens, that beautiful orange anemone of such a brilliant colour, there opens at certain hours the rainy marigold, a daisy-like flower with a violet-coloured disc and white rays above, violet and green underneath, which closes a little before rain.

But day is beginning to decline; the sparrows chirp and seem to squabble in the trees; bats fly around my head; the beauties of the day are closed, the beauties of the night and the *onagres* unfold and open their corollas.

Varai, bring me a light. Now for the fraxinella!

I was just at this point of my journey, my good friend, when an unusual noise interrupted the wonted silence of my retreat. It was the noise of a carriage and the horses galloping, with the crack of the post-boy's whip.

It was you, returned from your long voyage before I have half-finished mine. But you could only afford me a few minutes; you set out again for Paris two hours after your arrival; business imperatively required your presence.

I have put these letters in order, and sent them to you. When you come to see me, we will continue my journey together. Farewell!

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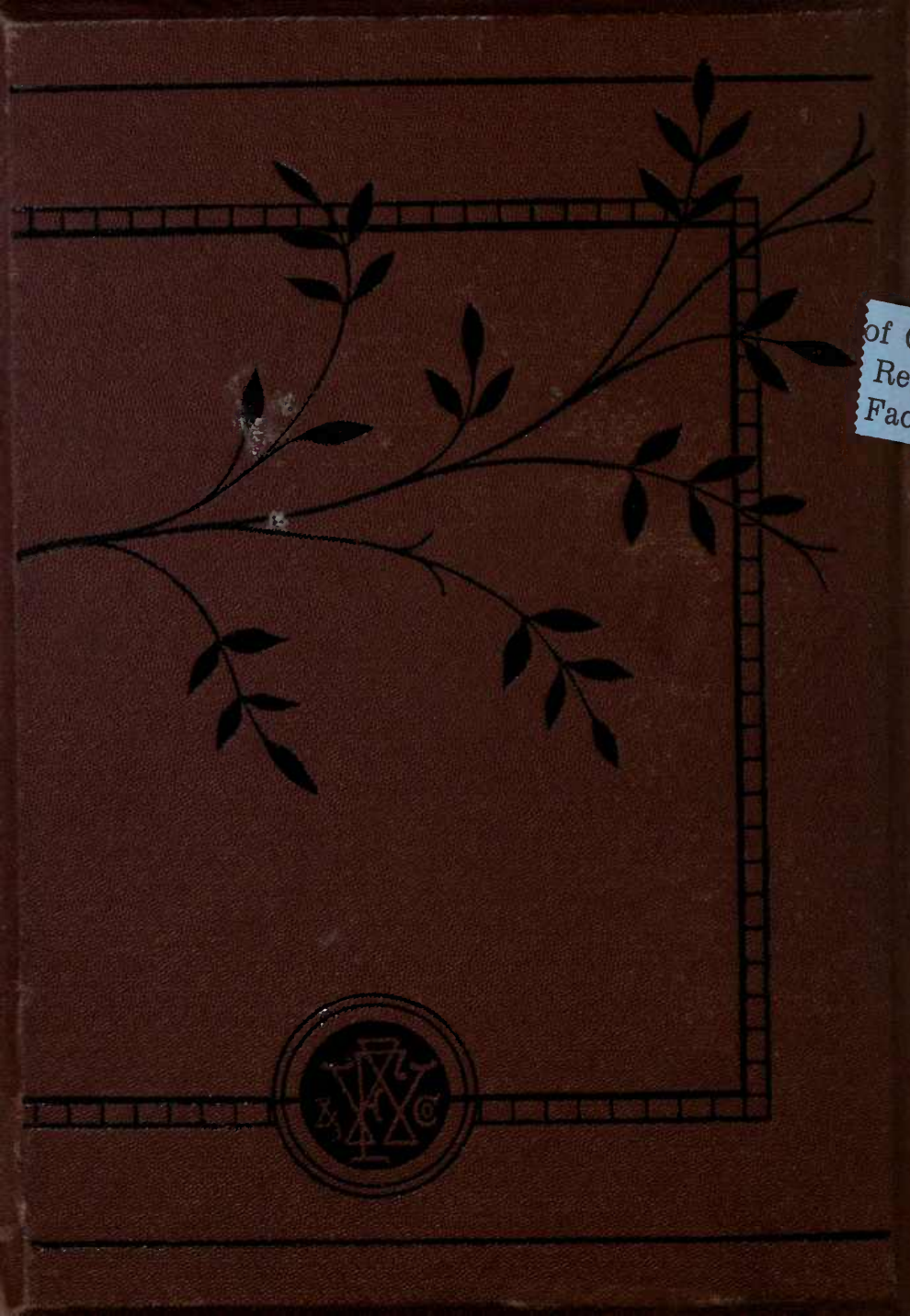
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